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The Works of Balzac

CENTENARY EDITION

VOLUME V.

**A START IN LIFE
AND OTHER STORIES**







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George Brock

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Frederick Gould





Scenes from Private Life

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE
OF
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

A START IN LIFE
VENDETTA
A STUDY OF A WOMAN
THE MESSAGE
PAZ
MADAME FIRMIANI

Illustrated by
GEORGE ROUX
AND
MAXIMILIENNE GUYON

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1899.

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University Press :

JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

TO LAURE.

Let the brilliant and modest mind that gave me the subject of this Scene have the honor of it.

Her brother,

DE BALZAC.



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From Photogravure Plates by Goupil & Co., Paris.

A START IN LIFE.

OSCAR AND HIS MOTHER *Frontispiece*

“SO HE IS YOUR NEPHEW?” CRIED FLORENTINE” *Page 231*

Designed by GEORGE ROUX.

PAZ.

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Designed by MAXIMILIENNE GUYON.



A START IN LIFE.

I.

THAT WHICH WAS LACKING TO PIERROTIN'S HAPPINESS.

RAILROADS, in a future not far distant, must force certain industries to disappear forever, and modify several others, more especially those relating to the different modes of transportation in use around Paris. Therefore the persons and things which are the elements of this Scene will soon give to it the character of an archæological work. Our nephews ought to be enchanted to learn the social material of an epoch which they will call the "olden time." The picturesque *coucous* which stood on the Place de la Concorde, encumbering the Cours-la-Reine, — *coucous* which had flourished for a century, and were still numerous in 1830, scarcely exist in 1842, unless on the occasion of some attractive suburban solemnity, like that of the Grandes Eaux of Versailles. In 1820, the various celebrated places called the "Environs of

Paris " did not all possess a regular stage-coach service.

Nevertheless, the Touchards, father and son, had acquired a monopoly of travel and transportation to all the populous towns within a radius of forty-five miles; and their enterprise constituted a fine establishment in the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis. In spite of their long-standing rights, in spite, too, of their efforts, their capital, and all the advantages of a powerful centralization, the Touchard coaches (*messageries*) found terrible competitors in the *coucous* for all points within a circumference of fifteen or twenty miles. The passion of the Parisian for the country is such that local enterprise could successfully compete with the Lesser Stage company, — *Petites Messageries*, the name given to the Touchard enterprise to distinguish it from that of the *Grandes Messageries* of the rue Montmartre. At the time of which we write, the Touchard success was stimulating speculators. For every small locality in the neighborhood of Paris there sprang up schemes of beautiful, rapid, and commodious vehicles, departing and arriving in Paris at fixed hours, which produced, naturally, a fierce competition. Beaten on the long distances of twelve to eighteen miles, the *coucou* came down to shorter trips, and so lived on for several years. At last, however, it succumbed to omnibuses, which demonstrated the possibility of carrying

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eighteen persons in a vehicle drawn by two horses. To-day the *coucou* — if by chance any of those birds of ponderous flight still linger in the second-hand carriage-shops — might be made, as to its structure and arrangement, the subject of learned researches comparable to those of Cuvier on the animals discovered in the chalk-pits of Montmartre.

These petty enterprises, which had struggled since 1822 against the Touchards, usually found a strong foothold in the good-will and sympathy of the inhabitants of the districts which they served. The person undertaking the business as proprietor and conductor was nearly always an inn-keeper along the route, to whom the beings, things, and interests with which he had to do were all familiar. He could execute commissions intelligently; he never asked as much for his little stages, and therefore obtained more custom than the Touchard coaches. He managed to elude the necessity of a custom-house permit. If need were, he was willing to infringe the law as to the number of passengers he might carry. In short, he possessed the affection of the masses; and thus it happened that whenever a rival came upon the same route, if his days for running were not the same as those of the *coucou*, travellers would put off their journey to make it with their long-tried coachman, although his vehicle and his horses might be in a far from reassuring condition.

One of the lines which the Touchards, father and son, endeavored to monopolize, and the one most stoutly disputed (as indeed it still is), is that of Paris to Beaumont-sur-Oise, — a line extremely profitable, for three rival enterprises worked it in 1822. In vain the Touchards lowered their price; in vain they constructed better coaches and started oftener. Competition still continued, so productive is a line on which are little towns like Saint-Denis and Saint-Brice, and villages like Pierrefitte, Groslay, Écouen, Poncelles, Moisselles, Monsoult, Maffliers, Franconville, Presles, Nointel, Nerville, etc. The Touchard coaches finally extended their route to Chambly; but competition followed. To-day the Toulouse, a rival enterprise, goes as far as Beauvais.

Along this route, which is that toward England, there lies a road which turns off at a place well-named, in view of its topography, The Cave, and leads through a most delightful valley in the basin of the Oise to the little town of Isle-Adam, doubly celebrated as the cradle of the family, now extinct, of Isle-Adam, and also as the former residence of the Bourbon-Contis. Isle-Adam is a little town flanked by two large villages, Nogent and Parmain, both remarkable for splendid quarries, which have furnished material for many of the finest buildings in modern Paris and in foreign lands, — for the base and capital of the columns of the

Brussels theatre are of Nogent stone. Though remarkable for its beautiful sites, for the famous châteaux which princes, monks, and designers have built, such as Cassan, Stora, Le Val, Nointel, Persan, etc., this region had escaped competition in 1822, and was reached by two coaches only, working more or less in harmony.

This exception to the rule of rivalry was founded on reasons that are easy to understand. From the Cave, the point on the route to England where a paved road (due to the luxury of the Princes of Conti) turned off to Isle-Adam, the distance is six miles. No speculating enterprise would make such a détour, for Isle-Adam was the terminus of the road, which did not go beyond it. Of late years, another road has been made between the valley of Montmorency and the valley of the Oise; but in 1822 the only road which led to Isle-Adam was the paved highway of the Princes of Conti. Pierrotin and his colleague reigned, therefore, from Paris to Isle-Adam, beloved by every one along the way. Pierrotin's vehicle, together with that of his comrade, and Pierrotin himself, were so well known that even the inhabitants on the main road as far as the Cave were in the habit of using them; for there was always better chance of a seat to be had than in the Beaumont coaches, which were almost always full. Pierrotin and his competitor were on the best of terms. When the

former started from Isle-Adam, the latter was returning from Paris, and *vice versa*.

It is unnecessary to speak of the rival. Pierrotin possessed the sympathies of his region; besides, he is the only one of the two who appears in this veracious narrative. Let it suffice you to know that the two coach proprietors lived under a good understanding, rivalled each other loyally, and obtained customers by honorable proceedings. In Paris they used, for economy's sake, the same yard, hotel, and stable, the same coach-house, office, and clerk. This detail is alone sufficient to show that Pierrotin and his competitor were, as the popular saying is, "good dough." The hotel at which they put up in Paris, at the corner of the rue d'Enghien, is still there, and is called the "Lion d'Argent." The proprietor of the establishment, which from time immemorial had lodged coachmen and coaches, drove himself for the great company of Daumartin, which was so firmly established that its neighbors, the Touchards, whose place of business was directly opposite, never dreamed of starting a rival coach on the Daumartin line.

Though the departures for Isle-Adam professed to take place at a fixed hour, Pierrotin and his co-rival practised an indulgence in that respect which won for them the grateful affection of the country-people, and also violent remonstrances on the part of strangers accustomed to

the regularity of the great lines of public conveyances. But the two conductors of these vehicles, which were half diligence, half *coucou*, were invariably defended by their regular customers. The afternoon departure at four o'clock usually lagged on till half-past, while that of the morning, fixed for eight o'clock, was seldom known to take place before nine. In this respect, however, the system was elastic. In summer, that golden period for the coaching business, the rule of departure, rigorous toward strangers, was often relaxed for country customers. This method not infrequently enabled Pierrotin to pocket two fares for one place, if a countryman came early and wanted a seat already booked and paid for by some "bird of passage" who was, unluckily for himself, a little late. Such elasticity will certainly not commend itself to purists in morality; but Pierrotin and his colleague justified it on the varied grounds of "hard times," of their losses during the winter months, of the necessity of soon getting better coaches, and of the duty of keeping exactly to the rules written on the tariff, copies of which were, however, never shown, unless some chance traveller was obstinate enough to demand it.

Pierrotin, a man about forty years of age, was already the father of a family. Released from the cavalry on the great disbandment of 1815, the worthy fellow had succeeded his father, who for many years had

driven a *coucou* of capricious flight between Paris and Isle-Adam. Having married the daughter of a small inn-keeper, he enlarged his business, made it a regular service, and became noted for his intelligence and a certain military precision. Active and decided in his ways, Pierrotin (the name seems to have been a sobriquet) contrived to give, by the vivacity of his countenance, an expression of sly shrewdness to his ruddy and weather-stained visage which suggested wit. He was not without that facility of speech which is acquired chiefly through "seeing life" and other countries. His voice, by dint of talking to his horses and shouting "Gare!" was rough; but he managed to tone it down with the *bourgeois*. His clothing, like that of all coachmen of the second class, consisted of stout boots, heavy with nails, made at Isle-Adam, trousers of bottle-green velveteen, waistcoat of the same, over which he wore, while exercising his functions, a blue blouse, ornamented on the collar, shoulder-straps, and cuffs, with many-colored embroidery. A cap with a visor covered his head. His military career had left in Pierrotin's manners and customs a great respect for all social superiority, and a habit of obedience to persons of the upper classes; and though he never willingly mingled with the lesser *bourgeoisie*, he always respected women in whatever station of life they belonged. Nevertheless, by dint of "trundling

the world," — one of his own expressions, — he had come to look upon those he conveyed as so many walking parcels, who required less care than the inanimate ones, — the essential object of a coaching business.

Warned by the general movement which, since the Peace, was revolutionizing his calling, Pierrotin would not allow himself to be outdone by the progress of new lights. Since the beginning of the summer season he had talked much of a certain large coach, ordered from Farry, Breilmann, and Company, the best makers of diligences, — a purchase necessitated by an increasing influx of travellers. Pierrotin's present establishment consisted of two vehicles. One, which served in winter, and the only one he reported to the tax-gatherer, was the *coucou* which he inherited from his father. The rounded flanks of this vehicle allowed him to put six travellers on two seats, of metallic hardness in spite of the yellow Utrecht velvet with which they were covered. These seats were separated by a wooden bar inserted in the sides of the carriage at the height of the travellers' shoulders, which could be placed or removed at will. This bar, speciously covered with velvet (Pierrotin called it "a back"), was the despair of the passengers, from the great difficulty they found in placing and removing it. If the "back" was difficult and even painful to handle, that was nothing to the suffering caused to the *omoplates* when the bar

was in place. But when it was left to lie loose across the coach, it made both ingress and egress extremely perilous, especially to women.

Though each seat of this vehicle, with rounded sides like those of a pregnant woman, could rightfully carry only three passengers, it was not uncommon to see eight persons on the two seats jammed together like herrings in a barrel. Pierrotin declared that the travellers were far more comfortable in a solid, immovable mass; whereas when only three were on a seat they banged each other perpetually, and ran much risk of injuring their hats against the roof by the violent jolting of the roads. In front of the vehicle was a wooden bench where Pierrotin sat, on which three travellers could perch; when there, they went, as everybody knows, by the name of *rabbits*. On certain trips Pierrotin placed four rabbits on the bench, and sat himself at the side, on a sort of box placed below the body of the coach as a foot-rest for the rabbits, which was always full of straw, or of packages that feared no damage. The body of this particular *coucou* was painted yellow, embellished along the top with a band of barber's blue, on which could be read, on the sides, in silvery white letters, "Isle-Adam, Paris," and across the back, "Line to Isle-Adam."

Our descendants will be mightily mistaken if they fancy that thirteen persons including Pierrotin were all

that this vehicle could carry. On great occasions it could take three more in a square compartment covered with an awning, where the trunks, cases, and packages were piled ; but the prudent Pierrotin only allowed his regular customers to sit there, and even they were not allowed to get in until at some distance beyond the *barrière*. The occupants of the "hen-roost" (the name given by conductors to this section of their vehicles) were made to get down outside of every village or town where there was a post of gendarmerie ; the overloading forbidden by law, " for the safety of passengers," being too obvious to allow the gendarme on duty — always a friend to Pierrotin — to avoid the necessity of reporting this flagrant violation of the ordinances. Thus on certain Saturday nights and Monday mornings, Pierrotin's *coucou* " trundled " fifteen travellers ; but on such occasions, in order to drag it along, he gave his stout old horse, called Rougeot, a mate in the person of a little beast no bigger than a pony, about whose merits he had much to say. This little horse was a mare named Bichette ; she ate little, she was spirited, she was indefatigable, she was worth her weight in gold.

" My wife would n't give her for that fat lazybones of a Rougeot ! " cried Pierrotin, when some traveller would joke him about his epitome of a horse.

The difference between this vehicle and the other consisted chiefly in the fact that the other was on four

wheels. This coach, of comical construction, called the "four-wheel-coach," held seventeen travellers, though it was bound not to carry more than fourteen. It rumbled so noisily that the inhabitants of Isle-Adam frequently said, "Here comes Pierrotin!" when he was scarcely out of the forest which crowns the slope of the valley. It was divided into two lobes, so to speak: one, called the *interior*, contained six passengers on two seats; the other, a sort of cabriolet constructed in front, was called the *coupé*. This coupé was closed in with very inconvenient and fantastic glass sashes, a description of which would take too much space to allow of its being given here. The four-wheeled coach was surmounted by a hooded *imperial*, into which Pierrotin managed to poke six passengers; this space was inclosed by leather curtains. Pierrotin himself sat on an almost invisible seat perched just below the sashes of the coupé.

The master of the establishment paid the tax which was levied upon all public conveyances on his *coucou* only, which was rated to carry six persons; and he took out a special permit each time that he drove the four-wheeler. This may seem extraordinary in these days, but when the tax on vehicles was first imposed, it was done very timidly, and such deceptions were easily practised by the coach proprietors, always pleased to *faire la queue* (cheat of their dues) the government

officials, to use the argot of their vocabulary. Gradually the greedy Treasury became severe; it forced all public conveyances not to roll unless they carried two certificates, — one showing that they had been weighed, the other that their taxes were duly paid. All things have their salad days, even the Treasury; and in 1822 those days still lasted. Often in summer, the “four-wheel coach,” and the *coucou* journeyed together, carrying between them thirty-two passengers, though Pierrotin was only paying a tax on six. On these specially lucky days the convoy started from the faubourg Saint-Denis at half-past four o’clock in the afternoon, and arrived gallantly at Isle-Adam by ten at night. Proud of this service, which necessitated the hire of an extra horse, Pierrotin was wont to say: —

“We went at a fine pace!”

But in order to do the twenty-seven miles in five hours with his caravan, he was forced to omit certain stoppages along the road, — at Saint-Brice, Moisselles, and La Cave.

The hôtel du Lion d’Argent occupies a piece of land which is very deep for its width. Though its frontage has only three or four windows on the faubourg Saint-Denis, the building extends back through a long courtyard, at the end of which are the stables, forming a large house standing close against the division wall of the adjoining property. The entrance is through a sort

of passage-way beneath the floor of the second story, in which two or three coaches had room to stand. In 1822 the offices of all the lines of coaches which started from the Lion d'Argent were kept by the wife of the inn-keeper, who had as many books as there were lines. She received the fares, booked the passengers, and stowed away, good-naturedly, in her vast kitchen the various parcels and packages to be transported. Travellers were satisfied with this easy-going, patriarchal system. If they arrived too soon, they seated themselves beneath the hood of the huge kitchen chimney, or stood within the passage-way, or crossed to the Café de l'Échiquier, which forms the corner of the street so named.

In the early days of the autumn of 1822, on a Saturday morning, Pierrotin was standing, with his hands thrust into his pockets through the apertures of his blouse, beneath the *porte-cochère* of the Lion d'Argent, whence he could see, diagonally, the kitchen of the inn, and through the long court-yard to the stables, which were defined in black at the end of it. Daumartin's diligence had just started, plunging heavily after those of the Touchards. It was past eight o'clock. Under the enormous porch or passage, above which could be read on a long sign, "Hôtel du Lion d'Argent," stood the stablemen and porters of the coaching-lines watching the lively start of the vehicles which deceives so

many travellers, making them believe that the horses will be kept to that vigorous gait.

"Shall I harness 'up, master?" asked Pierrotin's hostler, when there was nothing more to be seen along the road.

"It is a quarter-past eight, and I don't see any travellers," replied Pierrotin. "Where have they poked themselves? Yes, harness up all the same. And there are no parcels either! Twenty good Gods! a fine day like this, and I've only four booked! A pretty state of things for a Saturday! It is always the way when you want money! A dog's life, and a dog's business!"

"If you had more, where would you put them? There's nothing left but the cabriolet," said the hostler, intending to soothe Pierrotin.

"You forget the new coach!" cried Pierrotin.

"Have you really got it?" asked the man, laughing, and showing a set of teeth as white and broad as almonds.

"You old good-for-nothing! It starts to-morrow, I tell you; and I want at least eighteen passengers for it."

"Ha, ha! a fine affair; it'll warm up the road," said the hostler.

"A coach like that which runs to Beaumont, hey? Flaming! painted red and gold to make Touchard

burst with envy! It takes three horses! I have bought a mate for Rougeot, and Bichette will go finely in unicorn. Come, harness up!" added Pierrotin, glancing out toward the street, and stuffing the tobacco into his clay pipe. "I see a lady and lad over there with packages under their arms; they are coming to the Lion d'Argent, for they've turned a deaf ear to the *coucous*. *Tiens, tiens!* seems to me I know that lady for an old customer."

"You've often started empty, and arrived full," said his porter, still by way of consolation.

"But no parcels! Twenty good Gods! What a fate!"

And Pierrotin sat down on one of the huge stone posts which protected the walls of the building from the wheels of the coaches; but he did so with an anxious, reflective air that was not habitual with him.

This conversation, apparently insignificant, had stirred up cruel anxieties which were slumbering in his breast. What could there be to trouble the heart of Pierrotin in a fine new coach? To shine upon "the road," to rival the Touchards, to magnify his own line, to carry passengers who would compliment him on the conveniences due to the progress of coach-building, instead of having to listen to perpetual complaints of his *sabots* (tires of enormous width), — such was Pierrotin's laudable ambition; but, carried away with the

desire to outstrip his comrade on the line, hoping that the latter might some day retire and leave to him alone the transportation to Isle-Adam, he had gone too far. The coach was indeed ordered from Barry, Breilmann, and Company, coach-builders, who had just substituted square English springs for those called "swan-necks," and other old-fashioned French contrivances. But these hard and distrustful manufacturers would only deliver over the diligence in return for coin. Not particularly pleased to build a vehicle which would be difficult to sell if it remained upon their hands, these long-headed dealers declined to undertake it at all until Pierrotin had made a preliminary payment of two thousand francs. To satisfy this precautionary demand, Pierrotin had exhausted all his resources and all his credit. His wife, his father-in-law, and his friends had bled. This superb diligence he had been to see the evening before at the painter's; all it needed now was to be set a-rolling, but to make it roll, payment in full must, alas! be made.

Now, a thousand francs were lacking to Pierrotin, and where to get them he did not know. He was in debt to the master of the Lion d'Argent; he was in danger of losing his two thousand francs already paid to the coach-builder, not counting five hundred for the mate to Rougeot, and three hundred for new harnesses, on which he had a three-months' credit. Driven by the

fury of despair and the madness of vanity, he had just openly declared that the new coach was to start on the morrow. By offering fifteen hundred francs, instead of the two thousand five hundred still due, he was in hopes that the softened carriage-builders would give him his coach. But after a few moments' meditation, his feelings led him to cry out aloud: —

"No! they're dogs! harpies! Suppose I appeal to Monsieur Moreau, the steward at Presles? he is such a kind man," thought Pierrotin, struck with a new idea. "Perhaps he would take my note for six months."

At this moment a footman in livery, carrying a leather portmanteau and coming from the Touchard establishment, where he had gone too late to secure places as far as Chambly, came up and said: —

"Are you Pierrotin?"

"Say on," replied Pierrotin.

"If you would wait a quarter of an hour, you could take my master. If not, I'll carry back the portmanteau and try to find some other conveyance."

"I'll wait two, three quarters, and throw a little in besides, my lad," said Pierrotin, eying the pretty leather trunk, well buckled, and bearing a brass plate with a coat of arms.

"Very good; then take this," said the valet, riding his shoulder of the trunk, which Pierrotin lifted, weighed, and examined.

"Here," he said to his porter, "wrap it up carefully in soft hay and put it in the boot. There's no name upon it," he added.

"Monseigneur's arms are there," replied the valet.

"Monseigneur! Come and take a glass," said Pierrotin, nodding toward the Café de l'Échiquier, whither he conducted the valet. "Waiter, two absinthes!" he said, as he entered. "Who is your master? and where is he going? I have never seen you before," said Pierrotin to the valet as they touched glasses.

"There's a good reason for that," said the footman. "My master only goes into your parts about once a year, and then in his own carriage. He prefers the valley d'Orge, where he has the most beautiful park in the neighborhood of Paris, a perfect Versailles, a family estate of which he bears the name. Don't you know Monsieur Moreau?"

"The steward of Presles?"

"Yes. Monsieur le Comte is going down to spend a couple of days with him."

"Ha! then I'm to carry Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy!" cried the coach-proprietor.

"Yes, my lad, neither more nor less. But listen! here's a special order. If you have any of the country neighbors in your coach you are not to call him Monsieur le comte; he wants to travel *en cognito*, and told me to be sure to say he would pay a handsome *pourboire* if he was not recognized."

“So! Has this secret journey anything to do with the affair which Père Léger, the farmer at the Mouligneaux, came to Paris the other day to settle?”

“I don’t know,” replied the valet, “but the fat’s in the fire. Last night I was sent to the stable to order the Daumont carriage to be ready to go to Presles at seven this morning. But when seven o’clock came, Monsieur le comte countermanded it. Augustin, his valet de chambre, attributes the change to the visit of a lady who called last night, and again this morning, — he thought she came from the country.”

“Could she have told him anything against Monsieur Moreau? — the best of men, the most honest of men, a king of men, hey! He might have made a deal more than he has out of his position, if he’d chosen; I can tell you that.”

“Then he was foolish,” answered the valet, sententiously.

“Is Monsieur de Sérizy going to live at Presles at last?” asked Pierrotin; “for you know they have just repaired and refurnished the château. Do you think it is true he has already spent two hundred thousand francs upon it?”

“If you or I had half what he has spent upon it, you and I would be rich *bourgeois*. If Madame la comtesse goes there — ha! I tell you what! no more ease and comfort for the Moreaus,” said the valet, with an air of mystery.

"He's a worthy man, Monsieur Moreau," remarked Pierrotin, thinking of the thousand francs he wanted to get from the steward. "He is a man who makes others work, but he does n't cheapen what they do; and he gets all he can out of the land — for his master. Honest man! He often comes to Paris and gives me a good fee: he has lots of errands for me to do in Paris; sometimes three or four packages a day, — either from monsieur or from madame. My bill for cartage alone comes to fifty francs a month, more or less. If madame does set up to be somebody, she's fond of her children; and it is I who fetch them from school and take them back; and each time she gives me five francs, — a real great lady couldn't do better than that. And every time I have any one in the coach belonging to them or going to see them, I'm allowed to drive up to the château, — that's all right, isn't it?"

"They say Monsieur Moreau was n't worth three thousand francs when Monsieur le comte made him steward of Presles," said the valet.

"Well, since 1806, there's seventeen years, and the man ought to have made something at any rate."

"True," said the valet, nodding. "Anyway, masters are very annoying; and I hope, for Moreau's sake, that he has made butter for his bread."

"I have often been to your house in the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to carry baskets of game," said Pier-

rotin, "but I've never had the advantage, so far of seeing either monsieur or madame."

"Monsieur le comte is a good man," said the footman, confidentially. "But if he insists on your helping to keep up his *cognito* there's something in the wind. At any rate, so we think at the house; or else, why should he countermand the Daumont, — why travel in a *coucou*? A peer of France might afford to hire a cabriolet to himself, one would think."

"A cabriolet would cost him forty francs to go there and back; for let me tell you, if you don't know it, that road was only made for squirrels, — up-hill and down, down-hill and up!" said Pierrotin. "Peer of France or *bourgeois*, they are all looking after the main chance, and saving their money. If this journey concerns Monsieur Moreau, faith, I'd be sorry any harm should come to him! Twenty good Gods! had n't I better find some way of warning him? — for he's a truly good man, a kind man, a king of men, hey!"

"Pooh! Monsieur le comte thinks everything of Monsieur Moreau," replied the valet. "But let me give you a bit of good advice. Every man for himself in this world. We have enough to do to take care of ourselves. Do what Monsieur le comte asks you to do, and all the more because there's no trifling with him. Besides, to tell the truth, the count is generous. If

you oblige him so far," said the valet, pointing half-way down his little finger, "he'll send you on as far as that," stretching out his arm to its full length.

This wise reflection, and the action that enforced it, had the effect, coming from a man who stood as high as second valet to the Comte de Sérizy, of cooling the ardor of Pierrotin for the steward of Presles.

"Well, adieu, Monsieur Pierrotin," said the valet.

A glance rapidly cast on the life of the Comte de Sérizy, and on that of his steward, is here necessary in order to fully understand the little drama now about to take place in Pierrotin's vehicle.

II.

THE STEWARD IN DANGER.

MONSIEUR HUGUET DE SÉRISY descends in a direct line from the famous president Huguet, ennobled under François I.

This family bears: party per pale or and sable, an orle counterchanged and two lozenges counterchanged, with: *i, semper melius eris*, — a motto which, together with the two distaffs taken as supporters, proves the modesty of the burgher families in the days when the Orders held their allotted places in the State; and the *naïveté* of our ancient customs by the pun on *eris*, which word, combined with the *i* at the beginning and the final *s* in *melius*, forms the name (Sérisy) of the estate from which the family take their title.

The father of the present count was president of a parliament before the Revolution. He himself a councillor of State at the Grand Council of 1787, when he was only twenty-two years of age, was even then distinguished for his admirable memoranda on delicate diplomatic matters. He did not emigrate during the Revolution, and spent that period on his estate of Sérizy near Arpajon, where the respect in which his

father was held protected him from all danger. After spending several years in taking care of the old president, who died in 1794, he was elected about that time to the Council of the Five Hundred, and accepted those legislative functions to divert his mind from his grief. After the 18th Brumaire, Monsieur de Sérizy became, like so many other of the old parliamentary families, an object of the First Consul's blandishment. He was appointed to the Council of State, and received one of the most disorganized departments of the government to reconstruct. This scion of an old historical family proved to be a very active wheel in the grand and magnificent organization which we owe to Napoleon.

The councillor of State was soon called from his particular administration to a ministry. Created count and senator by the Emperor, he was made proconsul to two kingdoms in succession. In 1806, when forty years of age, he married the sister of the ci-devant Marquis de Ronquerolles, the widow at twenty of Gaubert, one of the most illustrious of the Republican generals, who left her his whole property. This marriage, a suitable one in point of rank, doubled the already considerable fortune of the Comte de Sérizy, who became through his wife the brother-in-law of the ci-devant Marquis de Rouvre, made count and chamberlain by the Emperor.

In 1814, weary with constant toil, the Comte de Sérizy, whose shattered health required rest, resigned

all his posts, left the department at the head of which the Emperor had placed him, and came to Paris, where Napoleon was compelled by the evidence of his eyes to admit that the count's illness was a valid excuse, though at first that *unfatigable* master, who gave no heed to the fatigue of others, was disposed to consider Monsieur de Sérizy's action as a defection. Though the senator was never in disgrace, he was supposed to have reason to complain of Napoleon. Consequently, when the Bourbons returned, Louis XVIII., whom Monsieur de Sérizy held to be his legitimate sovereign, treated the senator, now a peer of France, with the utmost confidence, placed him in charge of his private affairs, and appointed him one of his cabinet ministers. On the 20th of March, Monsieur de Sérizy did not go to Ghent. He informed Napoleon that he remained faithful to the house of Bourbon; would not accept his peerage during the Hundred Days, and passed that period on his estate at Sérizy.

After the second fall of the Emperor, he became once more a privy-councillor, was appointed vice-president of the Council of State, and liquidator, on behalf of France, of claims and indemnities demanded by foreign powers. Without personal assumption, without ambition even, he possessed great influence in public affairs. Nothing of importance was done without consulting him; but he never went to court, and

was seldom seen in his own salons. This noble life, devoting itself from its very beginning to work, had ended by becoming a life of incessant toil. The count rose at all seasons by four o'clock in the morning, and worked till mid-day, attended to his functions as peer of France and vice-president of the Council of State in the afternoons, and went to bed at nine o'clock. In recognition of such labor, the King had made him a knight of his various Orders. Monsieur de Sérizy had long worn the grand cross of the Legion of honor; he also had the orders of the Golden Fleece, of Saint-Andrew of Russia, that of the Prussian Eagle, and nearly all the lesser Orders of the courts of Europe. No man was less obvious, or more useful in the political world than he. It is easy to understand that the world's honor, the fuss and feathers of public favor, the glories of success were indifferent to a man of this stamp; but no one, unless a priest, ever comes to a life of this kind without some serious underlying reason. His conduct had its cause, and a cruel one.

In love with his wife before he married her, this passion had lasted through all the secret unhappiness of his marriage with a widow, — a woman mistress of herself before as well as after her second marriage, and who used her liberty all the more freely because her husband treated her with the indulgence of a mother for a spoilt child. His constant toil served him as

shield and buckler against pangs of heart which he silenced with the care that diplomatists give to the keeping of secrets. He knew, moreover, how ridiculous was jealousy in the eyes of a society that would never have believed in the conjugal passion of an old statesman. How happened it that from the earliest days of his marriage his wife so fascinated him? Why did he suffer without resistance? How was it that he dared not resist? Why did he let the years go by and still hope on? By what means did this young and pretty and clever woman hold him in bondage?

The answer to all these questions would require a long history, which would injure our present tale. Let us only remark here that the constant toil and grief of the count had unfortunately contributed not a little to deprive him of personal advantages very necessary to a man who attempts to struggle against dangerous comparisons. In fact, the most cruel of the count's secret sorrows was that of causing repugnance to his wife by a malady of the skin resulting solely from excessive labor. Kind, and always considerate of the countess, he allowed her to be mistress of herself and her home. She received all Paris; she went into the country; she returned from it precisely as though she were still a widow. He took care of her fortune and supplied her luxury as a steward might have done. The countess had the utmost respect for her husband. She even admired his turn of

mind ; she knew how to make him happy by approbation ; she could do what she pleased with him by simply going to his study and talking for an hour with him. Like the great seigneurs of the olden time, the count protected his wife so loyally that a single word of disrespect said of her would have been to him an unpardonable injury. The world admired him for this ; and Madame de Sérizy owed much to it. Any other woman, even though she came of a family as distinguished as the Ronquerolles, might have found herself degraded in public opinion. The countess was ungrateful, but she mingled a charm with her ingratitude. From time to time she shed a balm upon the wounds of her husband's heart.

Let us now explain the meaning of this sudden journey, and the incognito maintained by a minister of State.

A rich farmer of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Léger, leased and cultivated a farm, the fields of which projected into and greatly injured the magnificent estate of the Comte de Sérizy, called Presles. This farm belonged to a burgher of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Margueron. The lease made to Léger in 1799, at a time when the great advance of agriculture was not foreseen, was about to expire, and the owner of the farm refused all offers from Léger to renew the lease. For some time past, Monsieur de Sérizy, wishing to

rid himself of the annoyances and petty disputes caused by the inclosure of these fields within his land, had desired to buy the farm, having heard that Monsieur Margueron's chief ambition was to have his only son, then a mere tax-gatherer, made special collector of finances at Beaumont. The farmer, who knew he could sell the fields piecemeal to the count at a high price, was ready to pay Margueron even more than he expected from the count.

Thus matters stood when, two days earlier than that of which we write, Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to end the matter, sent for his notary, Alexandre Crottat, and his lawyer, Derville, to examine into all the circumstances of the affair. Though Derville and Crottat threw some doubt on the zeal of the count's steward (a disturbing letter from whom had led to the consultation), Monsieur de Sérizy defended Moreau, who, he said, had served him faithfully for seventeen years.

"Very well!" said Derville, "then I advise your Excellency to go to Presles yourself, and invite this Margueron to dinner. Crottat will send his head-clerk with a deed of sale drawn up, leaving only the necessary lines for description of property and titles in blank. Your Excellency should take with you part of the purchase money in a check on the Bank of France, not forgetting the appointment of the son to the collectorship. If you don't settle the thing at once that

farm will slip through your fingers. You don't know, Monsieur le comte, the trickery of those peasants. Peasants against diplomat, and the diplomat succumbs.

Crottat agreed in this advice, which the count, if we may judge by the valet's statements to Pierrotin, had adopted. The preceding evening he had sent Moreau a line by the diligence to Beaumont, telling him to invite Margueron to dinner in order that they might then and there close the purchase of the farm of Moulineaux.

Before this matter came up, the count had already ordered the château of Presles to be restored and re-furnished, and for the last year, Grindot, an architect then in fashion, was in the habit of making it a weekly visit. So, while concluding his purchase of the farm, Monsieur de Sérizy also intended to examine the work of restoration and the effect of the new furniture. He intended all this to be a surprise to his wife when he brought her to Presles, and with this idea in his mind, he had put some personal pride and self-love into the work. How came it therefore that the count, who intended in the evening to drive to Presles openly in his own carriage, should be starting early the next morning incognito in Pierrotin's *coucou*?

Here a few words on the life of the steward Moreau become indispensable.

Moreau, steward of the estate of Presles, was the son of a provincial attorney who became during the

Revolution syndic-attorney at Versailles. In that position, Moreau the father had been the means of almost saving both the lives and property of the Sérizys, father and son. Citizen Moreau belonged to the Danton party; Robespierre, implacable in his hatreds, pursued him, discovered him, and finally had him executed at Versailles. Moreau the son, heir to the doctrines and friendships of his father, was concerned in one of the conspiracies which assailed the First Consul on his accession to power. At this crisis, Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to pay his debt of gratitude, enabled Moreau, lying under sentence of death, to make his escape; in 1804 he asked for his pardon, obtained it, offered him first a place in his government office, and finally took him as private secretary for his own affairs.

Some time after the marriage of his patron Moreau fell in love with the countess's waiting-woman and married her. To avoid the annoyances of the false position in which this marriage placed him (more than one example of which could be seen at the imperial court), Moreau asked the count to give him the management of the Presles estate, where his wife could play the lady in a country region, and neither of them would be made to suffer from wounded self-love. The count wanted a trustworthy man at Presles, for his wife preferred Sérizy, an estate only fifteen miles from Paris. For three or four years Moreau had held the key of

the count's affairs; he was intelligent, and before the Revolution he had studied law in his father's office; so Monsieur de Sérizy granted his request.

"You can never advance in life," he said to Moreau, "for you have broken your neck; but you can be happy, and I will take care that you are so."

He gave Moreau a salary of three thousand francs and his residence in a charming lodge near the château, all the wood he needed from the timber that was cut on the estate, oats, hay, and straw for two horses, and a right to whatever he wanted of the produce of the gardens. A sub-prefect is not as well provided for.

During the first eight years of his stewardship, Moreau managed the estate conscientiously; he took an interest in it. The count, coming down now and then to examine the property, pass judgment on what had been done, and decide on new purchases, was struck with Moreau's evident loyalty, and showed his satisfaction by liberal gifts.

But after the birth of Moreau's third child, a daughter, he felt himself so securely settled in all his comforts at Presles that he ceased to attribute to Monsieur de Sérizy those enormous advantages. About the year 1816, the steward, who until then had only taken what he needed for his own use from the estate, accepted a sum of twenty-five thousand francs from a wood-merchant as an inducement to lease to the latter,

for twelve years, the cutting of all the timber. Moreau argued thus: he could have no pension; he was the father of a family; the count really owed him that sum as a gift after ten years' management; already the legitimate possessor of sixty thousand francs in savings. If he added this sum to that, he could buy a farm worth a hundred and twenty-five thousand francs in Champagne, a township just above Isle-Adam, on the right bank of the Oise. Political events prevented both the count and the neighboring country-people from becoming aware of this investment, which was made in the name of Madame Moreau, who was understood to have inherited property from an aunt of her father.

As soon as the steward had tasted the delightful fruit of the possession of property, he began, all the while maintaining toward the world an appearance of the utmost integrity, to lose no occasion of increasing his fortune clandestinely; the interests of his three children served as a poultice to the wounds of his honor. Nevertheless, we ought in justice to say that while he accepted casks of wine, and took care of himself in all the purchases that he made for the count, yet according to the terms of the Code he remained an honest man, and no proof could have been found to justify an accusation against him. According to the jurisprudence of the least thieving cook in Paris, he shared with the count in the profits due to his own

capable management. This manner of swelling his fortune was simply a case of conscience, that was all. Alert, and thoroughly understanding the count's interests, Moreau watched for opportunities to make good purchases all the more eagerly, because he gained a larger percentage on them. Presles returned a revenue of seventy thousand francs net. It was a saying of the country-side for a circuit of thirty miles : —

“ Monsieur de Sérizy has a second self in Moreau.”

Being a prudent man, Moreau invested yearly, after 1817, both his profits and his salary on the Grand Livre, piling up his heap with the utmost secrecy. He often refused proposals on the plea of want of money ; and he played the poor man so successfully with the count that the latter gave him the means to send both his sons to the school Henri IV. At the present moment Moreau was worth one hundred and twenty thousand francs of capital invested in the Consolidated thirds, now paying five per cent, and quoted at eighty francs. These carefully hidden one hundred and twenty thousand francs, and his farm at Champagne, enlarged by subsequent purchases, amounted to a fortune of about two hundred and eighty thousand francs, giving him an income of some sixteen thousand.

Such was the position of the steward at the time when the Comte de Sérizy desired to purchase the farm of Moulineaux, — the ownership of which was indis-

pensable to his comfort. This farm consisted of ninety-six parcels of land bordering the estate of Presles, and frequently running into it, producing the most annoying discussions as to the trimming of hedges and ditches and the cutting of trees. Any other than a cabinet minister would probably have had scores of lawsuits on his hands. Père Léger only wished to buy the property in order to sell to the count at a handsome advance. In order to secure the exorbitant sum on which his mind was set, the farmer had long endeavored to come to an understanding with Moreau. Impelled by circumstances, he had, only three days before this critical Saturday, had a talk with the steward in the open field, and proved to him clearly that he (Moreau) could make the count invest his money at two and a half per cent, and thus appear to serve his patron's interests, while he himself pocketed forty thousand francs which Léger offered him to bring about the transaction.

"I tell you what," said the steward to his wife, as he went to bed that night, "if I make fifty thousand francs out of the Moulineaux affair, — and I certainly shall, for the count will give me ten thousand as a fee, — we'll retire to Isle-Adam and live in the Pavillon de Nogent."

This *pavillon* was a charming place, originally built by the Prince de Conti for a mistress, and in it every convenience and luxury had been placed.

"That will suit me," said his wife. "The Dutchman who lives there has put it in good order, and now that he is obliged to return to India, he would probably let us have it for thirty thousand francs."

"We shall be close to Champagne," said Moreau. "I am in hopes of buying the farm and mill of Mours for a hundred thousand francs. That would give us ten thousand a year in rentals. Nogent is one of the most delightful residences in the valley; and we should still have an income of ten thousand from the Grand-Livre."

"But why don't you ask for the post of juge-de-paix at Isle-Adam? That would give us influence, and fifteen hundred a year salary."

"Well, I did think of it."

With these plans in mind, Moreau, as soon as he heard from the count that he was coming to Presles, and wished him to invite Margueron to dinner on Saturday, sent off an express to the count's head-valet, inclosing a letter to his master, which the messenger failed to deliver before Monsieur de Sérizy retired at his usually early hour. Augustin, however, placed it, according to custom in such cases, on his master's desk. In this letter Moreau begged the count not to trouble himself to come down, but to trust entirely to him. He added that Margueron was no longer willing to sell the whole in one block, and talked of cutting the farm

up into a number of small lots. It was necessary to circumvent this plan, and perhaps, added Moreau, it might be best to employ a third party to make the purchase.

Everybody has enemies in this life. Now the steward and his wife had wounded the feelings of a retired army officer, Monsieur de Reybert, and his wife, who were living near Presles. From speeches like pin-pricks, matters had advanced to dagger-thrusts. Monsieur de Reybert breathed vengeance. He was determined to make Moreau lose his situation and gain it himself. The two ideas were twins. Thus the proceedings of the steward, spied upon for two years, were no secret to Reybert. The same conveyance that took Moreau's letter to the count conveyed Madame de Reybert, whom her husband despatched to Paris. There she asked with such earnestness to see the count that although she was sent away at nine o'clock, he having then gone to bed, she was ushered into his study the next morning at seven.

"Monsieur," she said to the cabinet-minister, "we are incapable, my husband and I, of writing anonymous letters, therefore I have come to see you in person. I am Madame de Reybert, *née* de Corroy. My husband is a retired officer, with a pension of six hundred francs, and we live at Presles, where your steward has offered us insult after insult, although we

are persons of good station. Monsieur de Reybert, who is not an intriguing man, far from it, is a captain of artillery, retired in 1816, having served twenty years, — always at a distance from the Emperor, Monsieur le comte. You know of course how difficult it is for soldiers who are not under the eye of their master to obtain promotion, — not counting that the integrity and frankness of Monsieur de Reybert were displeasing to his superiors. My husband has watched your steward for the last three years, being aware of his dishonesty and intending to have him lose his place. We are, as you see, quite frank with you. Moreau has made us his enemies, and we have watched him. I have come to tell you that you are being tricked in the purchase of the Molineaux farm. They mean to get an extra hundred thousand francs out of you, which are to be divided between the notary, the farmer Léger, and Moreau. You have written Moreau to invite Margueron, and you are going to Presles to-day; but Margueron will be ill, and Léger is so certain of buying the farm that he is now in Paris to draw the money. If we have enlightened you as to what is going on, and if you want an upright steward you will take my husband; though noble, he will serve you as he has served the State. Your steward has made a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs out of his place; he is not to be pitied therefore."

The count thanked Madame de Reybert coldly, bestowing upon her the holy-water of courts, for he despised backbiting; but for all that, he remembered Derville's doubts, and felt inwardly shaken. Just then he saw his steward's letter and read it. In its assurances of devotion and its respectful reproaches for the distrust implied in wishing to negotiate the purchase for himself, he read the truth.

"Corruption has come to him with fortune, — as it always does!" he said to himself.

The count then made several inquiries of Madame de Reybert, less to obtain information than to gain time to observe her; and he wrote a short note to his notary telling him not to send his head-clerk to Presles as requested, but to come there himself in time for dinner.

"Though Monsieur le comte," said Madame de Reybert in conclusion, "may have judged me unfavorably for the step I have taken unknown to my husband, he ought to be convinced that we have obtained this information about his steward in a natural and nonorable manner; the most sensitive conscience cannot take exception to it."

So saying, Madame de Reybert, *née* de Corroy, stood erect as a pike-staff. She presented to the rapid investigation of the count a face seamed with the small-pox like a colander with holes, a flat, spare figure, two light and eager eyes, fair hair plastered down upon

an anxious forehead, a small drawn-bonnet of faded green taffetas lined with pink, a white gown with violet spots, and leather shoes. The count recognized the wife of some poor, half-pay captain, a puritan, subscribing no doubt to the "*Courrier Français*," earnest in virtue, but aware of the comfort of a good situation and eagerly coveting it.

"You say your husband has a pension of six hundred francs," he said, replying to his own thoughts, and not to the remark Madame de Reybert had just made.

"Yes, monsieur."

"You were born a Corroy?"

"Yes, monsieur, — a noble family of Metz, where my husband belongs."

"In what regiment did Monsieur de Reybert serve?"

"The 7th artillery."

"Good!" said the count, writing down the number.

He had thought at one time of giving the management of the estate to some retired army officer, about whom he could obtain exact information from the minister of war.

"Madame," he resumed, ringing for his valet, "return to Presles, this afternoon with my notary, who is going down there for dinner, and to whom I have recommended you. Here is his address. I am going myself secretly to Presles, and will send for Monsieur de Reybert to come and speak to me."

It will thus be seen that Monsieur de Sérizy's journey by a public conveyance, and the injunction conveyed by the valet to conceal his name and rank had not unnecessarily alarmed Pierrotin. That worthy had just forebodings of a danger which was about to swoop down upon one of his best customers.

III.

THE TRAVELLERS.

As Pierrotin issued from the Café de l'Échiquier, after treating the valet, he saw in the gate-way of the Lion d'Argent the lady and the young man in whom his perspicacity at once detected customers, for the lady with outstretched neck and anxious face was evidently looking for him. She was dressed in a black-silk gown that was dyed, a brown bonnet, an old French cashmere shawl, raw-silk stockings, and low shoes; and in her hand she carried a straw bag and a blue umbrella. This woman, who had once been beautiful, seemed to be about forty years of age; but her blue eyes, deprived of the fire which happiness puts there, told plainly that she had long renounced the world. Her dress, as well as her whole air and manner, indicated a mother wholly devoted to her household and her son. If the strings of her bonnet were faded, the shape betrayed that it was several years old. The shawl was fastened by a broken needle converted into a pin by a head of sealing-wax. She was waiting impatiently for Pierrotin, wishing to recommend to his special care her son, who was doubtless travelling for

the first time, and with whom she had come to the coach-office as much from doubt of his ability as from maternal affection.

This mother was in a way completed by the son, so that the son would not be understood without the mother. If the mother condemned herself to mended gloves, the son wore an olive-green coat with sleeves too short for him, proving that he had grown, and might grow still more, like other adults of eighteen or nineteen years of age. The blue trousers, mended by his mother, presented to the eye a brighter patch of color when the coat-tails maliciously parted behind him.

"Don't rub your gloves that way, you'll spoil them," she was saying as Pierrotin appeared. "Is this the conductor? Ah! Pierrotin, is it you?" she exclaimed, leaving her son and taking the coachman apart a few steps.

"I hope you're well, Madame Clapart," he replied, with an air that expressed both respect and familiarity.

"Yes, Pierrotin, very well. Please take good care of my Oscar; he is travelling alone for the first time."

"Oh! so he is going alone to Monsieur Moreau!" cried Pierrotin, for the purpose of finding out whether he were really going there.

"Yes," said the mother.

"Then Madame Moreau is willing?" returned Pierrotin, with a sly look.

"Ah!" said the mother, "it will not be all roses for him, poor child! But his future absolutely requires that I should send him."

This answer struck Pierrotin, who hesitated to confide his fears for the steward to Madame Clapart, while she, on her part, was afraid of injuring her boy if she asked Pierrotin for a care which might have transformed him into a mentor. During this short deliberation, which was ostensibly covered by a few phrases as to the weather, the journey, and the stopping-places along the road, we will ourselves explain what were the ties that united Madame Clapart with Pierrotin, and authorized the two confidential remarks which they have just exchanged.

Often — that is to say, three or four times a month — Pierrotin, on his way to Paris, would find the steward on the road near La Cave. As soon as the vehicle came up, Moreau would sign to a gardener, who, with Pierrotin's help, would put upon the coach either one or two baskets containing the fruits and vegetables of the season, chickens, eggs, butter, and game. The steward always paid the carriage and Pierrotin's fee, adding the money necessary to pay toll at the *barrière*, if the baskets contained anything dutiable. These baskets, hampers, or packages, were never directed to any one. On the first occasion, which served for all others, the steward had given Madame Clapart's ad-

were those of the poorest families and provoked pity, the beds and sofas were of silver.

Monsieur Clapart, known as a steady surcoat, his feet in women slippers, always wore green spectacles, and exhibited, whenever he removed his shadowy cap or a hygienic towel, a painted skull from the top of which radiated a few dirty flames which even a poet could scarcely call hair. This man, of wan complexion, seemed nervous, but was tyrannical.

In this dreary apartment, which faced the north and had no other windows than in a vine on the opposite wall and a veil in the corner of the yard, Madame Clapart bore herself with the air of a queen, and moved like a woman accustomed to go anywhere on foot. Often, while watching Pierrotin, she gave him glances which would have seemed to pity an intelligent observer: from time to time she would slip a twelve-sous piece into his hand, and then her voice was charming. Pierrotin had never seen Oscar, for the reason that the boy was always in school at the time his business took him to the house.

Here is the sad story which Pierrotin could never have discovered, even by asking for information, as he sometimes did, from the portress of the house; for that individual knew nothing beyond the fact that the Claparts paid a rent of two hundred and fifty francs a year, had no servant but a charwoman who came

daily for a few hours in the morning, that Madame Clapart did some of her smaller washing herself, and paid the postage on her letters daily, being apparently unable to let the sum accumulate.

There does not exist, or rather, there seldom exists, a criminal who is wholly criminal. Neither do we ever meet with a dishonest nature which is completely dishonest. It is possible for a man to cheat his master to his own advantage, or rake in for himself alone all the hay in the manger, but, even while laying up capital by actions more or less illicit, there are few men who never do good ones. If only from self-love, curiosity, or by way of variety, or by chance, every man has his moment of beneficence; he may call it his error, he may never do it again, but he sacrifices to Goodness, as the most surly man sacrifices to the Graces once or twice in his life. If Moreau's faults can ever be excused, it might be on the score of his persistent kindness in succoring a poor woman of whose favors he had once been proud, and in whose house he was hidden when in peril of his life.

This woman, celebrated under the Directory for her liaison with one of the five kings of that reign, married, through that all-powerful protection, a purveyor who was making his millions out of the government, and whom Napoleon ruined in 1802. This man, named Husson, became insane through his sudden fall from op-

ulence to penury : he ~~lung~~ himself into the Seine, leaving the beautiful Madame Husson pregnant. Moreau, very intimately allied with Madame Husson, was at that time condemned to death : he was unable therefore to marry the widow, being forced to leave France. Madame Husson, then twenty-two years old, married in her deep distress a government clerk named Clapart, aged twenty-seven, who was said to be a rising man. At that period of our history, government clerks were apt to become persons of importance ; for Napoleon was ever on the lookout for capacity. But Clapart, though endowed by nature with a certain coarse beauty, proved to have no intelligence. Thinking Madame Husson very rich, he feigned a great passion for her, and was simply saddled with the impossibility of satisfying either then or in the future the wants she had acquired in a life of opulence. He filled, very poorly, a place in the Treasury that gave him a salary of eighteen hundred francs ; which was all the new household had to live on. When Moreau returned to France as the secretary of the Comte de Sérizy he heard of Madame Husson's pitiable condition, and he was able, before his own marriage, to get her an appointment as head-waiting-woman to Madame Mère, the Emperor's mother. But in spite of that powerful protection Clapart was never promoted ; his incapacity was too apparent.

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Ruined in 1815 by the fall of the Empire, the brilliant Aspasia of the Directory had no other resources than Clapart's salary of twelve hundred francs from a clerkship obtained for him through the Comte de Sérizy. Moreau, the only protector of a woman whom he had known in possession of millions, obtained a half-scholarship for her son, Oscar Husson, at the school of Henri IV.; and he sent her regularly, by Pierrotin, such supplies from the estate at Presles as he could decently offer to a household in distress.

Oscar was the whole life and all the future of his mother. The poor woman could now be reproached with no other fault than her exaggerated tenderness for her boy,—the *bête-noire* of his step-father. Oscar was, unfortunately, endowed by nature with a foolishness his mother did not perceive, in spite of the step-father's sarcasms. This foolishness — or, to speak more specifically, this overweening conceit — so troubled Monsieur Moreau that he begged Madame Clapart to send the boy down to him for a month that he might study his character, and find out what career he was fit for. Moreau was really thinking of some day proposing Oscar to the count as his successor.

But to give to the devil and to God what respectively belongs to them, perhaps it would be well to show the causes of Oscar Husson's silly self-conceit, premising that he was born in the household of Madame Mère.

During his early childhood his eyes were dazzled by imperial splendors. His pliant imagination retained the impression of those gorgeous scenes, and nursed the images of a golden time of pleasure in hopes of recovering them. The natural boastfulness of school-boys (possessed of a desire to outshine their mates) resting on these memories of his childhood was developed in him beyond all measure. It may also have been that his mother at home dwelt too fondly on the days when she herself was a queen in Directorial Paris. At any rate, Oscar, who was now leaving school, had been made to bear many humiliations which the paying pupils put upon those who hold scholarships, unless the scholars are able to impose respect by superior physical ability.

This mixture of former splendor now departed, of beauty gone, of blind maternal love, of sufferings heroically borne, made the mother one of those pathetic figures which catch the eye of many an observer in Paris.

Incapable, naturally, of understanding the real attachment of Moreau to this woman, or that of the woman for the man she had saved in 1797, now her only friend, Pierrotin did not think it best to communicate the suspicion that had entered his head as to some danger which was threatening Moreau. The valet's speech, "We have enough to do in this world

to look after ourselves," returned to his mind, and with it came that sentiment of obedience to what he called the *chefs de file*, — the front-rank men in war, and men of rank in peace. Besides, just now Pierrotin's head was as full of his own stings as there are five-franc pieces in a thousand francs. So that the "Very good, madame," "Certainly, madame," with which he replied to the poor mother, to whom a trip of twenty miles appeared a journey, showed plainly that he desired to get away from her useless and prolix instructions.

"You will be sure to place the packages so that they cannot get wet if the weather should happen to change."

"I've a hood," replied Pierrotin. "Besides, see, madame, with what care they are being placed."

"Oscar, don't stay more than two weeks, no matter how much they may ask you," continued Madame Clapart, returning to her son. "You can't please Madame Moreau, whatever you do; besides, you must be home by the end of September. We are to go to Belleville, you know, to your uncle Cardot."

"Yes, mamma."

"Above all," she said, in a low voice, "be sure never to speak about servants; keep thinking all the time that Madame Moreau was once a waiting-maid."

"Yes, mamma."

Oscar, like all youths whose vanity is excessively ticklish, seemed annoyed at being lectured on the threshold of the Lion d'Argent.

"Well, now good-bye, mamma. We shall start soon; there's the horse all harnessed."

The mother, forgetting that she was in the open street, embraced her Oscar, and said, smiling, as she took a little roll from her basket:—

"*Tiens!* you were forgetting your roll and the chocolate! My child, once more, I repeat, don't take anything at the inns; they'd make you pay for the slightest thing ten times what it is worth."

Oscar would fain have seen his mother farther off as she stuffed the bread and chocolate into his pocket. The scene had two witnesses,—two young men a few years older than Oscar, better dressed than he, without a mother hanging on to them, whose actions, dress, and ways all betokened that complete independence which is the one desire of a lad still tied to his mother's apron-strings.

"He said *mamma!*" cried one of the new-comers, laughing.

The words reached Oscar's ears and drove him to say, "Good-bye, mother!" in a tone of terrible impatience.

Let us admit that Madame Clapart spoke too loudly, and seemed to wish to show to those around them her tenderness for the boy.

“What is the matter with you, Oscar?” asked the poor hurt woman. “I don’t know what to make of you,” she added in a severe tone, fancying herself able to inspire him with respect, — a great mistake made by those who spoil their children. “Listen, my Oscar,” she said, resuming at once her tender voice, “you have a propensity to talk, and to tell all you know, and all that you don’t know; and you do it to show off, with the foolish vanity of a mere lad. Now, I repeat, endeavor to keep your tongue in check. You are not sufficiently advanced in life, my treasure, to be able to judge of the persons with whom you may be thrown; and there is nothing more dangerous than to talk in public conveyances. Besides, in a diligence well-bred persons always keep silence.”

The two young men, who seemed to have walked to the farther end of the establishment, here returned, making their boot-heels tap upon the paved passage of the *porte-cochère*. They might have heard the whole of this maternal homily. So, in order to rid himself of his mother, Oscar had recourse to an heroic measure, which proved how vanity stimulates the intellect.

“Mamma,” he said, “you are standing in a draught, and you may take cold. Besides, I am going to get into the coach.”

The lad must have touched some tender spot, for his mother caught him to her bosom, kissed him as

if he were starting upon a long journey, and went with him to the vehicle with tears in her eyes.

“Don’t forget to give five francs to the servants when you come away,” she said; “write me three times at least during the fifteen days: behave properly, and remember all that I have told you. You have linen enough: don’t send any to the wash. Above all, remember Monsieur Moreau’s kindness; mind him as you would a father, and follow his advice.”

As he got into the coach. Oscar’s blue woollen stockings became visible, through the action of his trousers which drew up suddenly, also the new patch in the said trousers was seen, through the parting of his coat-tails. The smiles of the two young men, on whom these signs of an honorable indigence were not lost, were so many fresh wounds to the lad’s vanity.

“The first place was engaged for Oscar,” said the mother to Pierrotin. “Take the back seat,” she said to the boy, looking fondly at him with a loving smile.

Oh! how Oscar regretted that trouble and sorrow had destroyed his mother’s beauty, and that poverty and self-sacrifice prevented her from being better dressed! One of the young men, the one who wore top-boots and spurs, nudged the other to make him take notice of Oscar’s mother, and the other twirled his moustache with a gesture which signified, —

“Rather pretty figure!”

"How shall I ever get rid of mamma?" thought Oscar.

"What's the matter?" asked Madame Clapart.

Oscar pretended not to hear, the monster! Perhaps Madame Clapart was lacking in tact under the circumstances; but all absorbing sentiments have so much egotism!

"Georges, do you like children when travelling?" asked one young man of the other.

"Yes, my good Amaury, if they are weaned, and are named Oscar, and have chocolate."

These speeches were uttered in half-tones to allow Oscar to hear them or not hear them as he chose; his countenance was to be the weather-gauge by which the other young traveller could judge how much fun he might be able to get out of the lad during the journey. Oscar chose not to hear. He looked to see if his mother, who weighed upon him like a nightmare, was still there, for he felt that she loved him too well to leave him so quickly. Not only did he involuntarily compare the dress of his travelling companion with his own, but he felt that his mother's toilet counted for much in the smiles of the two young men.

"If they would only take themselves off!" he said to himself.

Instead of that, Amaury remarked to Georges, giving a tap with his cane to the heavy wheel of the *coucou*:

"And so, my friend, you are really going to trust your future to this fragile bark?"

"I must," replied Georges, in a tone of fatalism.

Oscar gave a sigh as he remarked the jaunty manner in which his companion's hat was stuck on one ear for the purpose of showing a magnificent head of blond hair beautifully brushed and curled; while he, by order of his step-father, had his black hair cut like a clothes-brush across the forehead, and clipped, like a soldier's, close to the head. The face of the vain lad was round and chubby and bright with the hues of health, while that of his fellow-traveller was long, and delicate, and pale. The forehead of the latter was broad, and his chest filled out a waistcoat of a cashmere pattern. As Oscar admired the tight-fitting iron-gray trousers and the overcoat with its frogs and olives clasping the waist, it seemed to him that this romantic-looking stranger, gifted with such advantages, insulted him by his superiority, just as an ugly woman feels injured by the mere sight of a pretty one. The click of the stranger's boot-heels offended his taste and echoed in his heart. He felt as hampered by his own clothes (made no doubt at home out of those of his step-father) as that envied young man seemed at ease in his.

"That fellow must have heaps of francs in his trousers pocket," thought Oscar.

The young man turned round. What were Oscar's

feelings on beholding a gold chain round his neck, at the end of which no doubt was a gold watch! From that moment the young man assumed, in Oscar's eyes, the proportions of a personage.

Living in the rue de la Cerisaie since 1815, taken to and from school by his step-father, Oscar had no other points of comparison since his adolescence than the poverty-stricken household of his mother. Brought up strictly, by Moreau's advice, he seldom went to the theatre, and then to nothing better than the Ambigu-Comique, where his eyes could see little elegance, if indeed the eyes of a child riveted on a melodrama were likely to examine the audience. His step-father still wore, after the fashion of the Empire, his watch in the fob of his trousers, from which there depended over his abdomen a heavy gold chain, ending in a bunch of heterogeneous ornaments, seals, and a watch-key with a round top and flat sides, on which was a landscape in mosaic. Oscar, who considered that old-fashioned finery as the *ne plus ultra* of adornment, was bewildered by the present revelation of superior and negligent elegance. The young man exhibited, offensively, a pair of spotless gloves, and seemed to wish to dazzle Oscar by twirling with much grace a gold-headed switch cane.

Oscar had reached that last quarter of adolescence when little things cause immense joys and immense

miseries. — a period when youth prefers misfortune to a ridiculous suit of clothes, and caring nothing for the real interests of life, torments itself about frivolities, about neckcloths, and the passionate desire to appear a man. Then the young fellow swells himself out; his swagger is all the more portentous because it is exercised on nothings. Yet if he envies a fool who is elegantly dressed, he is also capable of enthusiasm over talent, and of genuine admiration for genius. Such defects as these, when they have no root in the heart, prove only the exuberance of sap, — the richness of the youthful imagination. That a lad of nineteen, an only child, kept severely at home by poverty, adored by a mother who put upon herself all privations for his sake, should be moved to envy by a young man of twenty-two in a frogged surtout-coat silk-lined, a waist-coat of fancy cashmere, and a cravat slipped through a ring of the worst taste, is nothing more than a peccadillo committed in all ranks of social life by inferiors who envy those that seem beyond them. Men of genius themselves succumb to this primitive passion. Did not Rousseau admire Ventura and Bacle?

But Oscar passed from peccadillo to evil feelings. He felt humiliated; he was angry with the youth he envied, and there rose in his heart a secret desire to show openly that he himself was as good as the object of his envy.

The two young fellows continued to walk up and down from the gate to the stables, and from the stables to the gate. Each time they turned they looked at Oscar curled up in his corner of the *coucou*. Oscar, persuaded that their jokes and laughter concerned himself, affected the utmost indifference. He began to hum the chorus of a song lately brought into vogue by the liberals, which ended with the words, " 'T is Voltaire's fault, 't is Rousseau's fault."

" *Tiens!* perhaps he is one of the chorus at the Opera," said Amaury.

This exasperated Oscar, who bounded up, pulled out the wooden "back," and called to Pierrotin:—

"When do we start?"

"Presently," said that functionary, who was standing, whip in hand, and gazing toward the rue d'Enghien.

At this moment the scene was enlivened by the arrival of a young man accompanied by a true *gamin*, who was followed by a porter dragging a hand-cart. The young man came up to Pierrotin and spoke to him confidentially, on which the latter nodded his head, and called to his own porter. The man ran out and helped to unload the little hand-cart, which contained, besides two trunks, buckets, brushes, boxes of singular shape, and an infinity of packages and utensils which the youngest of the new-comers, who had climbed into the imperial, stowed away with such celerity that Oscar,

stables, the courtyard, the various lights and shades, and the details: then he looked at Mistigris, whose satirical glance had followed his own.

"Charming!" said Mistigris.

"Yes, very," replied the other.

"We seem to have got here too early," pursued Mistigris. "Couldn't we get a mouthful somewhere? My stomach, like Nature, abhors a vacuum."

"Have we time to get a cup of coffee?" said the artist, in a gentle voice, to Pierrotin.

"Yes, but don't be long," answered the latter.

"Good; that means we have a quarter of an hour," remarked Mistigris, with the innate genius for observation of the Paris *rapin*.

The pair disappeared. Nine o'clock was striking in the hotel kitchen. Georges thought it just and reasonable to remonstrate with Pierrotin.

"Hey! my friend; when a man is blessed with such wheels as these (striking the clumsy tires with his cane) he ought at least to have the merit of punctuality. The deuce! one does n't get into that thing for pleasure; I have business that is devilishly pressing or I wouldn't trust my bones to it. And that horse, which you call Rougeot, he does n't look likely to make up for lost time."

"We are going to harness Bichette while those gentlemen take their coffee," replied Pierrotin. "Go and

ask, you," he said to his porter, if Père Léger is coming with us — "

"Where is your Père Léger?" asked Georges.

"Over the way, at number 50. He couldn't get a place in the Beaumont diligence," said Pierrotin, still speaking to his porter and apparently making no answer to his customer; then he disappeared himself in search of Bichette.

Georges, after shaking hands with his friend, got into the coach, handling with an air of great importance a portfolio which he placed beneath the cushion of the seat. He took the opposite corner to that of Oscar, on the same seat.

"This Père Léger troubles me," he said.

"They can't take away our places," replied Oscar. "I have number one."

"And I number two," said Georges.

Just as Pierrotin reappeared, having harnessed Bichette, the porter returned with a stout man in tow, whose weight could not have been less than two hundred and fifty pounds at the very least. Père Léger belonged to the species of farmer which has a square back, a protuberant stomach, a powdered pigtail, and wears a little coat of blue linen. His white gaiters, coming above the knee, were fastened round the ends of his velveteen breeches and secured by silver buckles. His hob-nailed shoes weighed two pounds each. In

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his hand, he held a small reddish stick, much polished, with a large knob, which was fastened round his wrist by a thong of leather.

"And you are called Père Léger?" asked Georges, very seriously, as the farmer attempted to put a foot on the step.

"At your service," replied the farmer, looking in and showing a face like that of Louis XVIII., with fat, rubicund cheeks, from between which issued a nose that in any other face would have seemed enormous. His smiling eyes were sunken in rolls of fat. "Come, a helping hand, my lad!" he said to Pierrotin.

The farmer was hoisted in by the united efforts of Pierrotin and the porter, to cries of, "Houp la! hi! ha! hoist!" uttered by Georges.

"Oh! I'm not going far; only to La Cave," said the farmer, good-humoredly.

In France everybody takes a joke.

"Take the back seat," said Pierrotin, "there'll be six of you."

"Where's your other horse?" demanded Georges. "Is it as mythical as the third posthorse?"

"There she is," said Pierrotin, pointing to the little mare, who was coming along alone.

"He calls that insect a horse!" exclaimed Georges.

"Oh! she's good, that little mare," said the farmer, who by this time was seated. "Your ser-

vant, gentlemen. Well, Pierrotin, how soon do you start?"

"I have two travellers in there after a cup of coffee," replied Pierrotin.

The hollow-cheeked young man and his page reappeared.

"Come, let's start!" was the general cry.

"We are going to start," replied Pierrotin. "Now, then, make ready," he said to the porter, who began thereupon to take away the stones which stopped the wheels.

Pierrotin took Rougeot by the bridle and gave that guttural cry, "Ket, ket!" to tell the two animals to collect their energy; on which, though evidently stiff, they pulled the coach to the door of the Lion d'Argent. After which manœuvre, which was purely preparatory, Pierrotin gazed up the rue d'Enghien and then disappeared, leaving the coach in charge of the porter.

"*Ah ça!* is he subject to such attacks, — that master of yours?" said Mistigris, addressing the porter.

"He has gone to get his feed from the stable," replied the porter, well versed in all the usual tricks to keep passengers quiet.

"Well, after all," said Mistigris, "'art is long, but life is shorts' — to Bichette."

At this particular epoch, a fancy for mutilating or

transposing proverbs reigned in the studios. It was thought a triumph to find changes of letters, and sometimes of words, which still kept the semblance of the proverb while giving it a fantastic or ridiculous meaning.¹

"Patience, Mistigris!" said his master; "'come wheel, come whoa.'"

Pierrotin here returned, bringing with him the Comte de Sérizy, who had come through the rue de l'Échiquier, and with whom he had doubtless had a short conversation.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin, looking into the coach, "will you give your place to Monsieur le comte? That will balance the carriage better."

"We sha'n't be off for an hour if you go on this way," cried Georges. "We shall have to take down this infernal bar, which cost such trouble to put up. Why should everybody be made to move for the man who comes last? We all have a right to the places we took. What place has monsieur engaged? Come, find that out! Have n't you a way-book, a register, or something? What place has Monsieur Lecomte engaged?—count of what, I'd like to know."

"Monsieur le comte," said Pierrotin, visibly troubled, "I am afraid you will be uncomfortable."

¹ It is plainly impossible to translate many of these proverbs and put any fun or meaning into them.—*Tr.*

"Why did n't you keep better count of us?" said Mistigris. "'Short counts make good ends.'"

"Mistigris, behave yourself," said his master.

Monsieur de Sérizy was evidently taken by all the persons in the coach for a *bourgeois* of the name of Lecomte.

"Don't disturb any one," he said to Pierrotin. "I will sit with you in front."

"Come, Mistigris," said the master to his *rapin*, "remember the respect you owe to age; you don't know how shockingly old you may be yourself some day. 'Travel deforms youth.' Give your place to monsieur."

Mistigris opened the leathern curtain and jumped out with the agility of a frog leaping into the water.

"You must n't be a rabbit, august old man," he said to the count.

"Mistigris, 'ars est celare bonum,'" said his master.

"I thank you very much, monsieur," said the count to Mistigris's master, next to whom he now sat.

The minister of State cast a sagacious glance round the interior of the coach, which greatly affronted both Oscar and Georges.

"When persons want to be master of a coach, they should engage all the places," remarked Georges.

Certain now of his incognito, the Comte de Sérizy made no reply to this observation, but assumed the air of a good-natured *bourgeois*.

"Suppose you were late, would n't you be glad that the coach waited for you?" said the farmer to the two young men.

Pierrotin still looked up and down the street, whip in hand, apparently reluctant to mount to the hard seat where Mistigris was fidgeting.

"If you expect some one else, I am not the last," said the count.

"I agree to that reasoning," said Mistigris.

Georges and Oscar began to laugh impertinently.

"The old fellow does n't know much," whispered Georges to Oscar, who was delighted at this apparent union between himself and the object of his envy.

"*Parbleu!*" cried Pierrotin, "I should n't be sorry for two more passengers."

"I have n't paid; I'll get out," said Georges, alarmed.

"What are you waiting for, Pierrotin?" asked Père Léger.

Whereupon Pierrotin shouted a certain "Hi!" in which Bichette and Rougeot recognized a definitive resolution, and they both sprang toward the rise of the faubourg at a pace which was soon to slacken.

The count had a red face, of a burning red all over, on which were certain inflamed portions which his snow-white hair brought out into full relief. To any but heedless youths, this complexion would have re-

vealed a constant inflammation of the blood, produced by incessant labor. These blotches and pimples so injured the naturally noble air of the count that careful examination was needed to find in his green-gray eyes the shrewdness of the magistrate, the wisdom of a statesman, and the knowledge of a legislator. His face was flat, and the nose seemed to have been depressed into it. The hat hid the grace and beauty of his forehead. In short, there was enough to amuse those thoughtless youths in the odd contrasts of the silvery hair, the burning face, and the thick, tufted eyebrows which were still jet-black.

The count wore a long blue overcoat, buttoned in military fashion to the throat, a white cravat around his neck, cotton wool in his ears, and a shirt-collar high enough to make a large square patch of white on each cheek. His black trousers covered his boots, the toes of which were barely seen. He wore no decoration in his button-hole, and doeskin gloves concealed his hands. Nothing about him betrayed to the eyes of youth a peer of France, and one of the most useful statesmen in the kingdom.

Père Léger had never seen the count, who, on his side, knew the former only by name. When the count, as he got into the carriage, cast the glance about him which affronted Georges and Oscar, he was, in reality, looking for the head-clerk of his notary (in case he had

been forced, like himself, to take Pierrotin's vehicle), intending to caution him instantly about his own incognito. But feeling reassured by the appearance of Oscar, and that of Père Léger, and, above all, by the quasi-military air, the waxed moustache, and the general look of an adventurer that distinguished Georges, he concluded that his note had reached his notary, Alexandre Crottat, in time to prevent the departure of the clerk.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin, when they reached the steep hill of the faubourg Saint-Denis by the rue de la Fidélité, "suppose we get out, hey?"

"I'll get out, too," said the count, hearing Léger's name.

"Goodness! if this is how we are going, we shall do fourteen miles in fifteen days!" cried Georges.

"It is n't my fault," said Pierrotin, "if a passenger wishes to get out."

"Ten louis for you if you keep the secret of my being here as I told you before," said the count in a low voice, taking Pierrotin by the arm.

"Oh, my thousand francs!" thought Pierrotin as he winked an eye at Monsieur de Sérizy, which meant, "Rely on me."

Oscar and Georges stayed in the coach.

"Look here, Pierrotin, since Pierrotin you are," cried Georges, when the passengers were once more

stowed away in the vehicle, "if you don't mean to go faster than this, say so! I'll pay my fare and take a post-horse at Saint-Denis, for I have important business on hand which can't be delayed."

"Oh! he'll go well enough," said Père Léger. "Besides, the distance is n't great."

"I am never more than half an hour late," asserted Pierrotin.

"Well, you are not wheeling the Pope in this old barrow of yours," said Georges, "so, get on."

"Perhaps he's afraid of shaking monsieur," said Mistigris looking round at the count. "But you should n't have preferences, Pierrotin, it is n't right."

"*Coucous* and the Charter make all Frenchmen equals," said Georges.

"Oh! be easy," said Père Léger; "we are sure to get to La Chapelle by mid-day," — La Chapelle being the village next beyond the Barrière of Saint-Denis.

IV.

THE GRANDSON OF THE FAMOUS CZERNI-GEORGES.

THOSE who travel in public conveyances know that the persons thus united by chance do not immediately have anything to say to one another; unless under special circumstances, conversation rarely begins until they have gone some distance. This period of silence is employed as much in mutual examination as in settling into their places. Minds need to get their equilibrium as much as bodies. When each person thinks he has discovered the age, profession, and character of his companions, the most talkative member of the company begins, and the conversation gets under way with all the more vivacity because those present feel a need of enlivening the journey and forgetting its tedium.

That is how things happen in French stage-coaches. In other countries customs are very different. Englishmen pique themselves on never opening their lips; Germans are melancholy in a vehicle; Italians too wary to talk; Spaniards have no public conveyances; and Russians no roads. There is no amusement except in the lumbering diligences of France, that

gabbling and indiscreet country, where every one is in a hurry to laugh and show his wit, and where jest and epigram enliven all things, even the poverty of the lower classes and the weightier cares of the solid *bourgeois*. In a coach there is no police to check tongues, and legislative assemblies have set the fashion of public discussion. When a young man of twenty-two, like the one named Georges, is clever and lively, he is much tempted, especially under circumstances like the present, to abuse those qualities.

In the first place, Georges had soon decided that he was the superior human being of the party there assembled. He saw in the count a manufacturer of the second-class, whom he took, for some unknown reason, to be a chandler; in the shabby young man accompanied by Mistigria, a fellow of no account; in Oscar a ninny, and in Père Léger, the fat farmer, an excellent subject to hoax. Having thus looked over the ground, he resolved to amuse himself at the expense of such companions.

"Let me see," he thought to himself, as the *coucou* went down the hill from La Chapelle to the plain of Saint-Denis, "shall I pass myself off for Étienne or Béranger? No, these idiots don't know who they are. Carbonaro? the dence! I might get myself arrested. Suppose I say I'm a son of Marshal Ney? Pooh! what could I tell them? — about the execution of my

father? It would n't be funny. Better be a disguised Russian prince and make them swallow a lot of stuff about the Emperor Alexander. Or I might be Cousin, and talk philosophy; oh, could n't I perplex 'em! But no, that shabby fellow with the tousled head looks to me as if he had jogged his way through the Sorbonne. What a pity! I can mimic an Englishman so perfectly I might have pretended to be Lord Byron, travelling incognito. Sapristi! I'll command the troops of Ali, pacha of Janina!"

During this mental monologue, the *coucou* rolled through clouds of dust rising on either side of it from the much travelled road.

"What dust!" cried Mistigris.

"Henry IV. is dead!" retorted his master. "If you'd say it was scented with vanilla that would be emitting a new opinion."

"You think you're witty," replied Mistigris. "Well, it is like vanilla at times."

"In the Levant — " said Georges, with the air of beginning a story.

"*Ex Oriente flux,*" remarked Mistigris's master, interrupting the speaker.

"I said in the Levant, from which I have just returned," continued Georges, "the dust smells very good; but here it smells of nothing, except in some old dust-barrel like this."

"Has monsieur lately returned from the Levant?" said Mistigris, maliciously. "He is n't much tanned by the sun."

"Oh! I've just left my bed after an illness of three months, from the germ, so the doctors said, of suppressed plague."

"Have you had the plague?" cried the count, with a gesture of alarm. "Pierrotin, stop!"

"Go on, Pierrotin," said Mistigris. "Did n't you hear him say it was inward, his plague?" added the *rapin*, talking back to Monsieur de Sérizy. "It is n't catching; it only comes out in conversation."

"Mistigris! if you interfere again I'll have you put off into the road," said his master. "And so," he added, turning to Georges, "monsieur has been to the East?"

"Yes, monsieur; first to Egypt, then to Greece, where I served under Ali, pacha of Janina, with whom I had a terrible quarrel. There's no enduring those climates long; besides, the emotions of all kinds in Oriental life have disorganized my liver."

"What, have you served as a soldier?" asked the fat farmer. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-nine," replied Georges, whereupon all the passengers looked at him. "At eighteen I enlisted as a private for the famous campaign of 1813; but I was present at only one battle, that of Hanau, where I was

promoted sergeant-major. In France, at Montoreau, I won the rank of sub-lieutenant, and was decorated by, — there are no informers here, I'm sure, — by the Emperor."

"What! are you decorated?" cried Oscar. "Why don't you wear your cross?"

"The cross of *ceux-ci*? No, thank you! Besides, what man of any breeding would wear his decorations in travelling? There's monsieur," he said, motioning to the Comte de Sérizy. "I'll bet whatever you like —"

"Betting whatever you like means, in France, betting nothing at all," said Mistigris's master.

"I'll bet whatever you like," repeated Georges, incisively, "that monsieur here is covered with stars."

"Well," said the count, laughing, "I have the grand cross of the Legion of honor, that of Saint Andrew of Russia, that of the Prussian Eagle, that of the Annunciation of Sardinia, and the Golden Fleece."

"Beg pardon," said Mistigris, "are they all in the *coucou*?"

"Hey! that brick-colored old fellow goes it strong!" whispered Georges to Oscar. "What was I saying? — oh! I know. I don't deny that I adore the Emperor —"

"I served under him," said the count.

"What a man he was, was n't he?" cried Georges.

"A man to whom I owe many obligations," replied the count, with a silly expression that was admirably assumed.

"For all those crosses?" inquired Mistigris.

"And what quantities of snuff he took!" continued Monsieur de Sérizy.

"He carried it loose in his pockets," said Georges.

"So I've been told," remarked Père Léger with an incredulous look.

"Worse than that; he chewed and smoked," continued Georges. "I saw him smoking, in a queer way, too, at Waterloo, when Marshal Soult took him round the waist and flung him into his carriage, just as he had seized a musket and was going to charge the English—"

"You were at Waterloo!" cried Oscar, his eyes stretching wide open.

"Yes, young man, I did the campaign of 1815. I was a captain at Mont-Saint-Jean, and I retired to the Loire, after we were all disbanded. Faith! I was disgusted with France; I could n't stand it. In fact, I should certainly have got myself arrested; so off I went, with two or three dashing fellows, — Selves, Besson, and others, who are now in Egypt, — and we entered the service of pacha Mohammed; a queer sort of fellow he was, too! Once a tobacco merchant in the bazaars, he is now on the high-road to be a

sovereign prince. You've all seen him in that picture by Horace Vernet, — 'The Massacre of the Mameluks.' What a handsome fellow he was! But I would n't give up the religion of my fathers and embrace Islamism; all the more because the abjuration required a surgical operation which I had n't any fancy for. Besides, nobody respects a renegade. Now if they had offered me a hundred thousand francs a year, perhaps — and yet, no! The pacha did give me a thousand talari as a present."

"How much is that?" asked Oscar, who was listening to Georges with all his ears.

"Oh! not much. A talaro is, as you might say, a five-franc piece. But faith! I got no compensation for the vices I contracted in that God-forsaken country, if country it is. I can't live now without smoking a narghile twice a-day, and that's very costly."

"How did you find Egypt?" asked the count.

"Egypt? Oh! Egypt is all sand," replied Georges, by no means taken aback. "There's nothing green but the valley of the Nile. Draw a green line down a sheet of yellow paper, and you have Egypt. But those Egyptians — fellahs they are called — have an immense advantage over us. There are no gendarmes in that country. You may go from end to end of Egypt and you won't see one."

"But I suppose there are a good many Egyptians," said Mistigris.

"Not as many as you think for," replied Georges. "There are many more Abyssinians, and Giaours, and Vechabites, Bedouins, and Cophs. But all that kind of animal is very uninteresting, and I was glad enough to embark on a Genoese polacca which was loading for the Ionian Islands with gunpowder and munitions for Ali de Tébelen. You know, don't you, that the British sell powder and munitions of war to all the world, — Turks, Greeks, and the devil, too, if the devil has money? From Zante we were to skirt the coasts of Greece and tack about, on and off. Now it happens that my name of Georges is famous in that country. I am, such as you see me, the grandson of the famous Czerni-Georges who made war upon the Porte, and, instead of crushing it, as he meant to do, got crushed himself. His son took refuge in the house of the French consul at Smyrna, and he afterwards died in Paris, leaving my mother pregnant with me, his seventh child. Our property was all stolen by friends of my grandfather; in fact, we were ruined. My mother, who lived on her diamonds, which she sold one by one, married, in 1799, my step-father, Monsieur Yung, a purveyor. But my mother is dead, and I have quarrelled with my step-father, who, between ourselves, is a blackguard; he is still alive, but I never see him. That's why, in despair, left all to myself, I went off to the wars as a private in 1813.

Well, to go back to the time I returned to Greece; you would n't believe with what joy old Ali Tébélén received the grandson of Czerni-Georges. Here, of course, I call myself simply Georges. The pacha gave me a harem — ”

“You have had a harem?” said Oscar.

“Were you a pacha with *many* tails?” asked Mistigris.

“How is it that you don't know,” replied Georges, “that only the Sultan makes pachas, and that my friend Tébélén (for we were as friendly as Bourbons) was in rebellion against the Padishah! You know, or you don't know, that the true title of the Grand Seignior is Padishah, and not Sultan or Grand Turk. You need n't think that a harem is much of a thing; you might as well have a herd of goats. The women are horribly stupid down there; I much prefer the grisettes of the Chaumières at Mont-Parnasse.”

“They are nearer, at any rate,” said the count.

“The women of the harem could n't speak a word of French, and that language is indispensable for talking. Ali gave me five legitimate wives and ten slaves; that's equivalent to having none at all at Janina. In the East, you must know, it is thought very bad style to have wives and women. They have them, just as we have Voltaire and Rousseau; but who ever opens his Voltaire or his Rousseau? Nobody. But,

for all that, the highest style is to be jealous. They sew a woman up in a sack and fling her into the water on the slightest suspicion, — that's according to their Code."

"Did you fling any in?" asked the farmer.

"I, a Frenchman! for shame! I loved them."

Whereupon Georges twirled and twisted his moustache with a dreamy air.

They were now entering Saint-Denis, and Pierrotin presently drew up before the door of a tavern where were sold the famous cheese-cakes of that place. All the travellers got out. Puzzled by the apparent truth mingled with Georges' inventions, the count returned to the *coucou* when the others had entered the house, and looked beneath the cushion for the portfolio which Pierrotin told him that enigmatical youth had placed there. On it he read the words in gilt letters: "Maitre Crottat, notary." The count at once opened it, and fearing, with some reason, that Père Léger might be seized with the same curiosity, he took out the deed of sale for the farm at Moulineaux, put it into his coat pocket, and entered the inn to keep an eye on the travellers.

"This Georges is neither more nor less than Crottat's second clerk," thought he. "I shall pay my compliments to his master, whose business it was to send me his head-clerk."

From the respectful glances of Père Léger and Oscar, Georges perceived that he had made for himself two fervent admirers. Accordingly, he now posed as a great personage; paid for their cheese-cakes, and ordered for each a glass of Alicante. He offered the same to Mistigris and his master, who refused with smiles; but the friend of Ali Tébélén profited by the occasion to ask the pair their names.

"Oh! monsieur," said Mistigris' master, "I am not blessed, like you, with an illustrious name; and I have not returned from Asia —"

At this moment the count, hastening into the huge inn-kitchen lest his absence should excite inquiry, entered the place in time to hear the conclusion of the young man's speech.

"— I am only a poor painter lately returned from Rome, where I went at the cost of the government, after winning the "grand prix" five years ago. My name is Schinner."

"Hey! *bourgeois*, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" said Georges to the count.

"Thank you," replied the latter. "I never leave home without taking my cup of coffee and cream."

"Don't you eat anything between meals? How *bourgeois*, Marais, Place Royale, that is!" cried Georges. "When he *blagued* just now about his

crosses, I thought there was something in him," whispered the Eastern hero to the painter. "However, we'll set him going on his decorations, the old tallow-chandler! Come, my lad," he added, calling to Oscar, "drink me down the glass poured out for the chandler; that will start your moustache."

Oscar, anxious to play the man, swallowed the second glass of wine, and ate three more cheese-cakes.

"Good wine, that!" said Père Léger, smacking his lips.

"It is all the better," said Georges, "because it comes from Bercy. I've been to Alicante myself, and I know that this wine no more resembles what is made there than my arm is like a windmill. Our made-up wines are a great deal better than the natural ones in their own country. Come, Pierrotin, take a glass! It is a great pity your horses can't take one, too; we might go faster."

"Forward, march!" cried Pierrotin, amid a mighty clacking of whips, after the travellers were again boxed up.

It was now eleven o'clock. The weather, which had been cloudy, cleared; the breeze swept off the mists, and the blue of the sky appeared in spots; so that when the *coucou* trundled along the narrow strip of road from Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte, the sun had fairly drunk up the last floating vapors of the

diaphanous veil which swathed the scenery of that famous region.

"Well, now, tell us why you left your friend the pacha," said Père Léger, addressing Georges.

"He was a very singular scamp," replied Georges, with an air that hid a multitude of mysteries. "He put me in command of his cavalry, — so far, so good —"

"Ah! that's why he wears spurs," thought poor Oscar.

"At that time Ali Tébélén wanted to rid himself of Chosrew pacha, another queer chap! You call him, here, Chaureff; but the name is pronounced, in Turkish, Cossereu. You must have read in the newspapers how old Ali drubbed Chosrew, and soundly, too, faith! Well, if it had n't been for me, Ali Tébélén himself would have bit the dust two days earlier. I was at the right wing, and I saw Chosrew, an old sly-boots, thinking to force our centre, — ranks closed, stiff, swift, fine movement *à la* Murat. Good! I take my time; then I charge, double-quick, and cut his line in two, — you understand? Ha! ha! after the affair was over, Ali kissed me —"

"Do they do that in the East?" asked the count, in a joking way.

"Yes, monsieur," said the painter, "that's done all the world over."

"After that," continued Georges, "Ali gave me yataghans, and carbines, and scimetars, and what-not. But when we got back to his capital he made me propositions, wanted me to drown a wife, and make a slave of myself, — Orientals are so queer! But I thought I'd had enough of it; for, after all, you know, Ali Tébélén was a rebel against the Porte. So I concluded I had better get off while I could. But I'll do Monsieur Tébélén the justice to say that he loaded me with presents, — diamonds, ten thousand talari, one thousand gold coins, a beautiful Greek girl for groom, a little Circassian for a mistress, and an Arab horse! Yes, Ali Tébélén, pacha of Janina, is too little known; he needs an historian. It is only in the East one meets with such iron souls, who can nurse a vengeance twenty years and accomplish it some fine morning. He had the most magnificent white beard that was ever seen, and a hard, stern face —"

"But what did you do with your treasures?" asked farmer Léger.

"Ha! that's it! you may well ask that! Those fellows down there have n't any Grand Livre nor any Bank of France. So I was forced to carry off my windfalls in a felucca, which was captured by the Turkish High-Admiral himself. Such as you see me here to-day, I came very near being impaled at Smyrna. Indeed, if it had n't been for Monsieur de

Rivière, our ambassador, who was there, they'd have taken me for an accomplice of Ali pacha. I saved my head, but, to tell the honest truth, all the rest, the ten thousand talari, the thousand gold pieces, and the fine weapons, were all, yes all, drunk up by the thirsty treasury of the Turkish admiral. My position was the more perilous because that very admiral chanced to be Chosrew pacha. After I routed him, the fellow had managed to obtain a position which is equal to that of our Admiral of the Fleet—"

"But I thought he was in the cavalry?" said Père Léger, who had followed the narrative with the deepest attention.

"Dear me! how little the East is understood in the French provinces!" cried Georges. "Monsieur, I'll explain the Turks to you. You are a farmer; the Padishah (that's the Sultan) makes you a marshal; if you don't fulfil your functions to his satisfaction, so much the worse for you, he cuts your head off; that's his way of dismissing his functionaries. A gardener is made a prefect; and the prime minister comes down to be a foot-boy. The Ottomans have no system of promotion and no hierarchy. From a cavalry officer Chosrew simply became a naval officer. Sultan Mahmoud ordered him to capture Ali by sea; and he did get hold of him, assisted by those beggarly English — who put their paw on most of the treasure.

This Chosrew, who had not forgotten the riding-lesson I gave him, recognized me. You understand, my goose was cooked, oh, brown! when it suddenly came into my head to claim protection as a Frenchman and a troubadour from Monsieur de Rivière. The ambassador, enchanted to find something to show him off, demanded that I should be set at liberty. The Turks have one good trait in their nature; they are as willing to let you go as they are to cut your head off; they are indifferent to everything. The French consul, charming fellow, friend of Chosrew, made him give back two thousand of the talari, and, consequently, his name is, as I may say, graven on my heart — ”

“What was his name?” asked Monsieur de Sérizy; and a look of some surprise passed over his face as Georges named, correctly, one of our most distinguished consul-generals who happened at that time to be stationed at Smyrna.

“I assisted,” added Georges, “at the execution of the Governor of Smyrna, whom the Sultan had ordered Chosrew to put to death. It was one of the most curious things I ever saw, though I’ve seen many, — I’ll tell you about it when we stop for breakfast. From Smyrna I crossed to Spain, hearing there was a revolution there. I went straight to Mina, who appointed me as his aide-de-camp with the rank of colonel. I fought for the constitutional cause, which will cer-

tainly be defeated when we enter Spain — as we undoubtedly shall, some of these days — ”

“You, a French soldier!” said the count, sternly. “You show extraordinary confidence in the discretion of those who are listening to you.”

“But there are no spies here,” said Georges.

“Are you aware, Colonel Georges,” continued the count, “that the Court of Peers is at this very time inquiring into a conspiracy which has made the government extremely severe in its treatment of French soldiers who bear arms against France, and who deal in foreign intrigues for the purpose of overthrowing our legitimate sovereigns.”

On hearing this stern admonition the painter turned red to his ears and looked at Mistigris, who seemed dumfounded.

“Well?” said Père Léger, “what next?”

“If,” continued the count, “I were a magistrate, it would be my duty to order the gendarmes at Pierrefitte to arrest the aide-de-camp of Mina, and to summon all present in this vehicle to testify to his words.”

This speech stopped Georges’ narrative all the more surely, because at this moment the *coucou* reached the guard-house of a brigade of gendarmerie, — the white flag floating, as the orthodox saying is, upon the breeze.

“You have too many decorations to do such a dastardly thing,” said Oscar.

"Never mind; we'll catch up with him soon," whispered Georges in the lad's ear.

"Colonel," cried Léger, who was a good deal disturbed by the count's outburst, and wanted to change the conversation, "in all these countries where you have been, what sort of farming do they do? How do they vary the crops?"

"Well, in the first place, my good fellow, you must understand, they are too busy cropping off each others' heads to think much of cropping the ground."

The count could n't help smiling; and that smile reassured the narrator.

"They have a way of cultivating which you will think very queer. They don't cultivate at all; that's their style of farming. The Turks and the Greeks, they eat onions or rice. They get opium from poppies, and it gives them a fine revenue. Then they have tobacco, which grows of itself, famous latakiah! and dates! and all kinds of sweet things that don't need cultivation. It is a country full of resources and commerce. They make fine rugs at Smyrna, and not dear."

"But," persisted Léger, "if the rugs are made of wool they must come from sheep; and to have sheep you must have fields, farms, culture —"

"Well, there may be something of that sort," replied Georges. "But their chief crop, rice, grows in the

water. As for me, I have only been along the coasts and seen the parts that are devastated by war. Besides, I have the deepest aversion to statistics."

"How about the taxes?" asked the farmer.

"Oh! the taxes are heavy; they take all a man has, and leave him the rest. The pacha of Egypt was so struck with the advantages of that system, that, when I came away he was on the point of organizing his own administration on that footing —"

"But," said Léger, who no longer understood a single word, "how?"

"How?" said Georges. "Why, agents go round and take all the harvests, and leave the fellahs just enough to live on. That's a system that does away with stamped papers and bureaucracy, the curse of France, hein?"

"By virtue of what right?" said Léger.

"Right? why it is a land of despotism. They have n't any rights. Don't you know the fine definition Montesquieu gives of despotism. 'Like the savage, it cuts down the tree to gather the fruits.' They don't tax, they take everything."

"And that's what our rulers are trying to bring us to. 'Tax vobiscum,' — no, thank you!" said Mistigris.

"But that is what we *are* coming to," said the count. "Therefore, those who own land will do well

to sell it. Monsieur Schinner must have seen how things are tending in Italy, where the taxes are enormous."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* the Pope is laying it on heavily," replied Schinner. "But the people are used to it. Besides, Italians are so good-natured that if you let 'em murder a few travellers along the highways they're contented."

"I see, Monsieur Schinner," said the count, "that you are not wearing the decoration you obtained in 1819; it seems the fashion nowadays not to wear orders."

Mistigris and the pretended Schinner blushed to their ears.

"Well, with me," said the artist, "the case is different. It is n't on account of fashion; but I don't want to be recognized. Have the goodness not to betray me, monsieur; I am supposed to be a little painter of no consequence, — a mere decorator. I'm on my way to a château where I must n't rouse the slightest suspicion."

"Ah! I see," said the count. "some intrigue, — a love affair! Youth is happy!"

Oscar, who was writhing in his skin at being a nobody and having nothing to say, gazed at Colonel Czerni-Georges and at the famous painter Schinner, and wondered how he could transform himself into

somebody. But a youth of nineteen, kept at home all his life, and going for two weeks only into the country, what could he be, or do, or say? However, the Ali-cante had got into his head, and his vanity was boiling in his veins; so when the famous Schinner allowed a romantic adventure to be guessed at in which the danger seemed as great as the pleasure, he fastened his eyes, sparkling with wrath and envy, upon that hero.

"Yes," said the count, with a credulous air, "a man must love a woman well to make such sacrifices."

"What sacrifices?" demanded Mistigris.

"Don't you know, my little friend, that a ceiling painted by so great a master as yours is worth its weight in gold?" replied the count. "If the civil list paid you, as it did, thirty thousand francs for each of those rooms in the Louvre," he continued, addressing Schinner, "a *bourgeois*—as you call us in your studios—ought certainly to pay you twenty thousand. Whereas, if you go to this château as a humble decorator, you will not get two thousand."

"The money is not the greatest loss," said Mistigris. "The work is sure to be a masterpiece, but he can't sign it, you know, for fear of compromising *her*."

"Ah! I'd return all my crosses to the sovereigns who gave them to me for the devotion that youth can win," said the count.

"That's just it!" said Mistigris, "when one's

young, one 's loved; plenty of love, plenty of women; but they do say: 'Where there 's wife, there 's mope.'"

"What does Madame Schinner say to all this?" pursued the count; "for I believe you married, out of love, the beautiful Adélaïde de Rouville, the protégée of old Admiral de Kergarouët; who, by the bye, obtained for you the order for the Louvre ceilings through his nephew, the Comte de Fontaine."

"A great painter is never married when he travels," said Mistigris.

"So that 's the morality of studios, is it?" cried the count, with an air of great simplicity.

"Is the morality of courts where you got those decorations of yours any better?" said Schinner, recovering his self-possession, upset for the moment by finding how much the count knew of Schinner's life as an artist.

"I never asked for any of my orders," said the count. "I believe I have loyally earned them."

" 'A fair yield and no flavour,' " said Mistigris.

The count was resolved not to betray himself; he assumed an air of good-humored interest in the country, and looked up the valley of Groslay as the *coucou* took the road to Saint-Brice, leaving that to Chantilly on the right.

"Is Rome as fine as they say it is?" said Georges, addressing the great painter.

"Rome is fine only to those who love it; a man must have a passion for it to enjoy it. As a city, I prefer Venice, — though I just missed being murdered there."

"Faith, yes!" cried Mistigris; "if it had n't been for me you'd have been gobbled up. It was that mischief-making tom-fool, Lord Byron, who got you into the scrape. Oh! was n't he raging, that buffoon of an Englishman?"

"Hush!" said Schinner. "I don't want my affair with Lord Byron talked about."

"But you must own, all the same, that you were glad enough I knew how to box," said Mistigris.

From time to time, Pierrotin exchanged sly glances with the count, which might have made less inexperienced persons than the five other travellers uneasy.

"Lords, pachas, and thirty-thousand-franc ceilings!" he cried. "I seem to be driving sovereigns. What *pourboires* I'll get!"

"And all the places paid for!" said Mistigris, slyly.

"It is a lucky day for me," continued Pierrotin; "for you know, Père Léger, about my beautiful new coach on which I have paid an advance of two thousand francs? Well, those dogs of carriage-builders, to whom I have to pay two thousand five hundred francs more, won't take fifteen hundred down, and my note for a thousand for two months! Those vultures

want it all. Who ever heard of being so stiff with a man in business these eight years, and the father of a family? — making me run the risk of losing everything, carriage and money too, if I can't find before to-morrow night that miserable last thousand! Hue, Bichette! They would n't play that trick on the great coach offices, I'll warrant you."

"Yes, that's it," said the *rapin*; "'your money or your strife.'"

"Well, you have only eight hundred now to get," remarked the count, who considered this moan, addressed to Père Léger, a sort of letter of credit drawn upon himself.

"True," said Pierrotin. "Xi! xi! Rougeot!"

"You must have seen many fine ceilings in Venice," resumed the count, addressing Schinner.

"I was too much in love to take any notice of what seemed to me then mere trifles," replied Schinner. "But I was soon cured of that folly, for it was in the Venetian states — in Dalmatia — that I received a cruel lesson."

"Can it be told?" asked Georges. "I know Dalmatia very well."

"Well, if you have been there, you know that all the people at that end of the Adriatic are pirates, rovers, corsairs retired from business, as they haven't been hanged — "

"Uscoques," said Georges.

Hearing the right name given, the count, who had been sent by Napoleon on one occasion to the Illyrian provinces, turned his head and looked at Georges, so surprised was he.

"The affair happened in that town where they make maraschino," continued Schinner, seeming to search for a name.

"Zara," said Georges. "I've been there; it is on the coast."

"You are right," said the painter. "I had gone there to look at the country, for I adore scenery. I've longed a score of times to paint landscape, which no one, as I think, understands but Mistigris, who will some day reproduce Hobbema, Ruysdael, Claude Lorrain, Poussin, and others."

"But," exclaimed the count, "if he reproduces one of them won't that be enough?"

"If you persist in interrupting, monsieur," said Oscar, "we shall never get on."

"And Monsieur Schinner was not addressing himself to you in particular," added Georges.

"T is n't polite to interrupt," said Mistigris, sententially, "but we all do it, and conversation would lose a great deal if we did n't scatter little condiments while exchanging our reflections. Therefore, continue, agreeable old gentleman, to lecture us, if you like. It

is done in the best society, and you know the proverb: 'we must 'owl with the wolves.' "

"I had heard marvellous things of Dalmatia," resumed Schinner, "so I went there, leaving Mistigris in Venice at an inn —"

"*Locanda*," interposed Mistigris; "keep to the local color."

"Zara is what is called a country town —"

"Yes," said Georges; "but it is fortified."

"*Parbleu!*" said Schinner; "the fortifications count for much in my adventure. At Zara there are a great many apothecaries. I lodged with one. In foreign countries everybody makes a principal business of letting lodgings; all other trades are accessory. In the evening, linen changed, I sat in my balcony. In the opposite balcony I saw a woman; oh! such a woman! Greek, — *that tells all!* The most beautiful creature in the town; almond eyes, lids that dropped like curtains, lashes like a paint-brush, a face with an oval to drive Raffaele mad, a skin of the most delicious coloring, tints well-blended, velvety! and hands, oh! —"

"They weren't made of butter like those of the David school," put in Mistigris.

"You are always lugging in your painting," cried Georges.

"La, la!" retorted Mistigris; "'an ounce o' paint is worth a pound of swagger.'"

"And such a costume! pure Greek!" continued Schinner. "Conflagration of soul! you understand? Well, I questioned my Diafoirus; and he told me that my neighbor was named Zena. Changed my linen. The husband, an old villain, in order to marry Zena, paid three hundred thousand francs to her father and mother, so celebrated was the beauty of that beautiful creature, who was truly the most beautiful girl in all Dalmatia, Illyria, Adriatica, and other places. In those parts they buy their wives without seeing them —"

"I shall not go *there*," said Père Léger.

"There are nights when my sleep is still illuminated by the eyes of Zena," continued Schinner. "The husband was sixty-nine years of age, and jealous! not as a tiger, for they say of a tiger, 'jealous as a Dalmatian;' and my man was worse than *a* Dalmatian, one Dalmatian, — he was three and a half Dalmatians at the very least; he was an Uscoque, tricoque, archicoque in a bicoque of a paltry little place like Zara —"

"Horrid fellow, and 'horrider bellow,'" put in Mistigris.

"Ha! good," said Georges, laughing.

"After being a corsair, and probably a pirate, he thought no more of spitting a Christian on his dagger than I did of spitting on the ground," continued Schinner. "So that was how the land lay. The old

wretch had millions, and was hideous with the loss of an ear some pacha had cut off, and the want of an eye left I don't know where. 'Never,' said the little Diafoirus, 'never does he leave his wife, never for a second.' 'Perhaps she'll want your services, and I could go in your clothes; that's a trick that has great success in our theatres,' I said to him. Well, it would take too long to tell you all the delicious moments of that lifetime — to wit, three days — which I passed exchanging looks with Zena, and changing linen every day. It was all the more violently titillating because the slightest motion was significant and dangerous. At last it must have dawned upon Zena's mind that none but a Frenchman and an artist was daring enough to make eyes at her in the midst of the perils by which she was surrounded; and as she hated her hideous pirate, she answered my glances with delightful ogles fit to raise a man to the summit of Paradise without pulleys. I attained to the height of Don Quixote; I rose to exaltation! and I cried: 'The monster may kill me, but I'll go, I'll go!' I gave up landscape and studied the ignoble dwelling of the Uscoque. That night, changed linen, and put on the most perfumed shirt I had; then I crossed the street, and entered —"

"The house?" cried Oscar.

"The house?" echoed Georges.

"The house," said Schinner.

"Well, you 're a bold dog," cried farmer Léger. "I should have kept out of it myself."

"Especially as you could never have got through that doorway," replied Schinner. "So in I went," he resumed, "and I found two hands stretched out to meet mine. I said nothing, for those hands, soft as the peel of an onion, enjoined me to silence. A whisper breathed into my ear, 'He sleeps!' Then, as we were sure that nobody would see us, we went to walk, Zena and I, upon the ramparts, but accompanied, if you please, by a duenna, as hideous as an old portress, who did n't leave us any more than our shadow; and I could n't persuade Madame Pirate to send her away. The next night we did the same thing, and again I wanted to get rid of the old woman, but Zena resisted. As my sweet love spoke only Greek, and I Venetian, we could n't understand each other, and so we quarrelled. I said to myself, in changing linen, 'As sure as fate, the next time there 'll be no old woman, and we can make it all up with the language of love.' Instead of which, fate willed that that old woman should save my life! You 'll hear how. The weather was fine, and, not to create suspicion, I took a turn at landscape, — this was after our quarrel was made up, you understand. After walking along the ramparts for some time, I was coming tranquilly home with my

hands in my pockets, when I saw the street crowded with people. Such a crowd! like that for an execution. It fell upon me; I was seized, garroted, gagged, and guarded by the police. Ah! you don't know — and I hope you never may know — what it is to be taken for a murderer by a maddened populace which stones you and howls after you from end to end of the principal street of a town, shouting for your death! Ah! those eyes were so many flames, all mouths were a single curse, while from the volume of that burning hatred rose the fearful cry: 'To death! to death! down with the murderer!'

"So those Dalmatians spoke our language, did they?" said the count. "I observe you relate the scene as if it happened yesterday."

Schinner was nonplussed.

"Riot has but one language," said the astute statesman Mistigris.

"Well," continued Schinner, "when I was brought into court in presence of the magistrates, I learned that the cursèd corsair was dead, poisoned by Zena. I'd liked to have changed linen then. Give you my word, I knew nothing of *that* melodrama. It seems the Greek girl put opium (a great many poppies, as monsieur told us, grow about there) in the pirate's grog, just to make him sleep soundly and leave her free for a little walk with me, and the old duenna, unfortunate

creature, made a mistake and trebled the dose. The immense fortune of that cursèd pirate was really the cause of all my Zena's troubles. But she explained matters so ingenuously that I, for one, was released with an injunction from the mayor and the Austrian commissary of police to go back to Rome. Zena, who let the heirs of the Uscoque and the judges get most of the old villain's wealth, was let off with two years' seclusion in a convent, where she still is. I am going back there some day to paint her portrait; for in a few years, you know, all this will be forgotten. Such are the follies one commits at eighteen!"

"And you left me without a sou in the *locanda* at Venice," said Mistigris. "And I had to get from Venice to Rome by painting portraits for five francs apiece, which they did n't pay me. However, that was my halcyon time. I don't regret it."

"You can imagine the reflections that came to me in that Dalmatian prison, thrown there without protection, having to answer to Austrians and Dalmatians, and in danger of losing my head because I went twice to walk with a woman. There's ill-luck, with a vengeance!"

"Did all that really happen to you?" said Oscar, naïvely.

"Why should n't it happen to him, inasmuch as it had already happened during the French occupation

of Illyria to one of our most gallant officers of artillery?" said the count, slyly.

"And you believed that artillery officer?" said Mistigris, as slyly to the count.

"Is that all?" asked Oscar.

"Of course he can't tell you that they cut his head off, — how could he?" said Mistigris. 'Dead schinners tell no tales.'"

"Monsieur, are there farms in that country?" asked Père Léger. "What do they cultivate?"

"Maraschino," replied Mistigris, — "a plant that grows to the height of the lips, and produces a liqueur which goes by that name."

"Ah!" said Père Léger.

"I only stayed three days in the town and fifteen in prison," said Schinner, "so I saw nothing; not even the fields where they grow the maraschino."

"They are fooling you," said Georges to the farmer. "Maraschino comes in cases."

"'Romances alter cases,' " remarked Mistigris.

V.

THE DRAMA BEGINS.

PIERROTIN's vehicle was now going down the steep incline of the valley of Saint-Brice to the inn which stands in the middle of the large village of that name, where Pierrotin was in the habit of stopping an hour to breathe his horses, give them their oats, and water them. It was now about half-past one o'clock.

"Ha! here's Père Léger," cried the inn-keeper, when the coach pulled up before the door. "Do you breakfast?"

"Always once a day," said the fat farmer; "and I'll break a crust here and now."

"Give us a good breakfast," cried Georges, twirling his cane in a cavalier manner which excited the admiration of poor Oscar.

But that admiration was turned to jealousy when he saw the gay adventurer pull out from a side-pocket a small straw case, from which he selected a light-colored cigar, which he proceeded to smoke on the threshold of the inn door while waiting for breakfast.

"Do you smoke?" he asked of Oscar.

"Sometimes," replied the ex-schoolboy, swelling out his little chest and assuming a jaunty air.

Georges presented the open case to Oscar and Schinner.

"Phew!" said the great painter; "ten-sous cigars!"

"The remains of those I brought back from Spain," said the adventurer. "Do you breakfast here?"

"No," said the artist. "I am expected at the château. Besides, I took something at the Lion d'Argent just before starting."

"And you?" said Georges to Oscar.

"I have breakfasted," replied Oscar.

Oscar would have given ten years of his life for boots and straps to his trousers. He sneezed, he coughed, he spat, and swallowed the smoke with ill-disguised grimaces.

"You don't know how to smoke," said Schinner; "look at me!"

With a motionless face Schinner breathed in the smoke of his cigar and let it out through his nose without the slightest contraction of feature. Then he took another whiff, kept the smoke in his throat, removed the cigar from his lips, and allowed the smoke slowly and gracefully to escape them.

"There, young man," said the great painter.

"Here, young man, here's another way; watch this," said Georges, imitating Schinner, but swallowing the smoke and exhaling none.

"And my parents believed they had educated me!" thought Oscar, endeavoring to smoke with better grace.

But his nausea was so strong that he was thankful when Mistigris filched his cigar, remarking, as he smoked it with evident satisfaction, "You have n't any contagious diseases, I hope."

Oscar in reply would fain have punched his head.

"How he does spend money!" he said, looking at Colonel Georges. "Eight francs for Alicante and the cheese-cakes; forty sous for cigars; and his breakfast will cost him —"

"Ten francs at least," replied Mistigris; "but that's how things are. 'Sharp stomachs make short purses.'"

"Come, Père Léger, let us drink a bottle of Bordeaux together," said Georges to the farmer.

"Twenty francs for his breakfast!" cried Oscar; "in all, more than thirty-odd francs since we started!"

Killed by a sense of his inferiority, Oscar sat down on a stone post, lost in a reverie which did not allow him to perceive that his trousers, drawn up by the effect of his position, showed the point of junction between the old top of his stocking and the new "footing," — his mother's handiwork.

"We are brothers in socks," said Mistigris, pulling up his own trousers sufficiently to show an effect of the same kind, — "'By the footing, Hercules.'"

The count, who overheard this, laughed as he stood with folded arms under the *porte-cochère*, a little behind the other travellers. However nonsensical these lads might be, the grave statesman envied their very follies; he liked their bragging and enjoyed the fun of their lively chatter.

"Well, are you to have Les Moulineaux? for I know you went to Paris to get the money for the purchase," said the inn-keeper to Père Léger, whom he had just taken to the stables to see a horse he wanted to sell to him. "It will be queer if you manage to fleece a peer of France and a minister of State like the Comte de Sérizy."

The person thus alluded to showed no sign upon his face as he turned to look at the farmer.

"I've done for him," replied Père Léger, in a low voice.

"Good! I like to see those nobles fooled. If you should want twenty thousand francs or so, I'll lend them to you — But François, the conductor of Touchard's six o'clock coach, told me that Monsieur Margueron was invited by the Comte de Sérizy to dine with him to-day at Presles."

"That was the plan of his Excellency, but we had our own little ways of thwarting it," said the farmer, laughing.

"The count could appoint Monsieur Margueron's

son, and you have n't any place to give, — remember that," said the inn-keeper.

"Of course I do; but if the count has the ministry on his side, I have King Louis XVIII.," said Père Léger, in a low voice. "Forty thousand of his pictures on coin of the realm given to Moreau will enable me to buy Les Moulineaux for two hundred and sixty thousand, money down, before Monsieur de Sérizy can do so. When he finds the sale is made, he'll be glad enough to buy the farm for three hundred and sixty thousand, instead of letting me cut it up in small lots right in the heart of his property."

"Well done, *bourgeois*!" cried the inn-keeper.

"Don't you think that's good play?" said Léger.

"Besides," said the inn-keeper, "the farm is really worth that to him."

"Yes; Les Moulineaux brings in to-day six thousand francs in rental. I'll take another lease of it at seven thousand five hundred for eighteen years. Therefore it is really an investment at more than two and a half per cent. The count can't complain of that. In order not to involve Moreau, he is himself to propose me as tenant and farmer; it gives him a look of acting for his master's interests by finding him nearly three per cent for his money, and a tenant who will pay well."

"How much will Moreau make, in all?"

"Well, if the count gives him ten thousand francs

for the transaction the matter will bring him in fifty thousand, — and well-earned, too."

"After all, the count, so they tell me, does n't like Presles. And then he is so rich, what does it matter what it costs him?" said the inn-keeper. "I have never seen him, myself."

"Nor I," said Père Léger. "But he must be intending to live there, or why should he spend two hundred thousand francs in restoring the château? It is as fine now as the King's own palace."

"Well, well," said the inn-keeper, "it was high time for Moreau to feather his nest."

"Yes, for if the masters come there," replied Léger, "they won't keep their eyes in their pockets."

The count lost not a word of this conversation, which was held in a low voice, but not in a whisper.

"Here I have actually found the proofs I was going down there to seek," he thought, looking at the fat farmer as he entered the kitchen. "But perhaps," he added, "it is only a scheme; Moreau may not have listened to it."

So unwilling was he to believe that his steward could lend himself to such a conspiracy.

Pierrotin here came out to water his horses. The count, thinking that the driver would probably breakfast with the farmer and the inn-keeper, feared some thoughtless indiscretion.

"All these people combine against us," he thought; "it is allowable to baffle them — Pierrotin," he said in a low voice as the man passed him, "I promised you ten louis to keep my secret; but if you continue to conceal my name (and remember, I shall know if you pronounce it, or make the slightest sign that reveals it to any one, no matter who, here or at Isle-Adam, before to-night), I will give you to-morrow morning, on your return trip, the thousand francs you need to pay for your new coach. Therefore, by way of precaution," added the count, striking Pierrotin, who was pale with happiness, on the shoulder, "don't go in there to breakfast; stay with your horses."

"Monsieur le comte, I understand you; don't be afraid! it relates to Père Léger, of course?"

"It relates to every one," replied the count.

"Make yourself easy. — Come, hurry," said Pierrotin, a few moments later, putting his head into the kitchen. "We are late. Père Léger, you know there's a hill to climb; I'm not hungry, and I'll drive on slowly; you can soon overtake me, — it will do you good to walk a bit."

"What a hurry you are in, Pierrotin!" said the innkeeper. "Can't you stay and breakfast? The colonel here pays for the wine at fifty sous, and has ordered a bottle of champagne."

"I can't. I've got a fish I must deliver by three

o'clock for a great dinner at Stors; there's no fooling with customers, or fishes, either."

"Very good," said Père Léger to the inn-keeper. "You can harness that horse you want to sell me into the cabriolet; we'll breakfast in peace and overtake Pierrotin, and I can judge of the beast as we go along. We can go three in your jolter."

To the count's surprise, Pierrotin himself rebridled the horses. Schinner and Mistigris had walked on. Scarcely had Pierrotin overtaken the two artists and was mounting the hill from which Écouen, the steeple of Mesnil, and the forests that surround that most beautiful region, came in sight, when the gallop of a horse and the jingling of a vehicle announced the coming of Père Léger and the grandson of Czerni-Georges, who were soon restored to their places in the *coucou*.

As Pierrotin drove down the narrow road to Moisselles, Georges, who had so far not ceased to talk with the farmer of the beauty of the hostess at Saint-Brice, suddenly exclaimed: "Upon my word, this landscape is not so bad, great painter, is it?"

"Pooh! you who have seen the East and Spain can't really admire it."

"I've two cigars left! If no one objects, will you help me finish them, Schinner? the little young man there seems to have found a whiff or two enough for him."

Père Léger and the count kept silence, which passed for consent.

Oscar, furious at being called a "little young man," remarked, as the other two were lighting their cigars:

"I am not the aide-de-camp of Mina, monsieur, and I have not yet been to the East, but I shall probably go there. The career to which my family destine me will spare me, I trust, the annoyances of travelling in a *coucou* before I reach your present age. When I once become a personage I shall know how to maintain my station."

"*'Et cætera punctum!'*" crowed Mistigris, imitating the hoarse voice of a young cock; which made Oscar's deliverance all the more absurd, because he had just reached the age when the beard sprouts and the voice breaks. "'What a chit for chat!'" added the *rapin*.

"Your family, young man, destine you to some career, do they?" said Georges. "Might I ask what it is?"

"Diplomacy," replied Oscar.

Three bursts of laughter came from Mistigris, the great painter, and the farmer. The count himself could not help smiling. Georges was perfectly grave.

"By Allah!" he exclaimed, "I see nothing to laugh at in that. Though it seems to me, young man, that your respectable mother is, at the present moment,

not exactly in the social sphere of an ambassadress. She carried a handbag worthy of the utmost respect, and wore shoe-strings which — ”

“My mother, monsieur!” exclaimed Oscar, in a tone of indignation. “That was the person in charge of our household.”

“‘Our household’ is a very aristocratic term,” remarked the count.

“Kings have households,” replied Oscar, proudly.

A look from Georges repressed the desire to laugh which took possession of everybody; he contrived to make Mistigris and the painter understand that it was necessary to manage Oscar cleverly in order to work this new mine of amusement.

“Monsieur is right,” said the great Schinner to the count, motioning towards Oscar. “Well-bred people always talk of their ‘households;’ it is only common persons like ourselves who say ‘home.’ For a man so covered with decorations — ”

“‘Nunc my eye, nunc alii,’” whispered Mistigris.

“—you seem to know little of the language of courts. I ask your future protection, Excellency,” added Schinner, turning to Oscar.

“I congratulate myself on having travelled with three such distinguished men,” said the count, — “a painter already famous, a future general, and a young diplomatist who may some day recover Belgium for France.”

Having committed the odious crime of repudiating his mother, Oscar, furious from a sense that his companions were laughing at him, now resolved, at any cost, to make them pay attention to him.

“ ‘All is not gold that glitters,’ ” he began, his eyes flaming.

“That’s not it,” said Mistigris. “ ‘All is not old that titters.’ You’ll never get on in diplomacy if you don’t know your proverbs better than that.”

“I may not know proverbs, but I know my way — ”

“It must be far,” said Georges, “for I saw that person in charge of your household give you provisions enough for an ocean voyage: rolls, chocolate — ”

“A special kind of bread and chocolate, yes, monsieur,” returned Oscar; “my stomach is much too delicate to digest the victuals of a tavern.”

“ ‘Victuals’ is a word as delicate and refined as your stomach,” said Georges.

“Ah! I like that word ‘victuals,’ ” cried the great painter.

“The word is all the fashion in the best society,” said Mistigris. “I use it myself at the café of the Black Hen.”

“Your tutor is, doubtless, some celebrated professor, is n’t he? — Monsieur Andrieux of the Académie Française, or Monsieur Royer-Collard?” asked Schinner.

"My tutor is or was the Abbé Loraux, now vicar of Saint-Sulpice," replied Oscar, recollecting the name of the confessor at his school.

"Well, you were right to take a private tutor," said Mistigris. "'Tuto, tutor, celeritus, and jocund.' Of course, you will reward him well, your abbé?"

"Undoubtedly he will be made a bishop some day," said Oscar.

"By your family influence?" inquired Georges, gravely.

"We shall probably contribute to his rise, for the Abbé Frayssinous is constantly at our house."

"Ah! you know the Abbé Frayssinous?" asked the count.

"He is under obligations to my father," answered Oscar.

"Are you on your way to your estate?" asked Georges.

"No, monsieur; but I am able to say where I am going, if others are not. I am going to the Château de Presles, to the Comte de Sérizy."

"The devil! are you going to Presles?" cried Schinner, turning as red as a cherry.

"So you know his Excellency the Comte de Sérizy?" said Georges.

Père Léger turned round to look at Oscar with a stupefied air.

"Is Monsieur de Sérizy at Presles?" he said.

"Apparently, as I am going there," replied Oscar.

"Do you often see the count?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Often," replied Oscar. "I am a comrade of his son, who is about my age, nineteen; we ride together on horseback nearly every day."

"'Aut Cæsar, aut Sérizy,'" said Mistigris, sententially.

Pierrotin and Père Léger exchanged winks on hearing this statement.

"Really," said the count to Oscar, "I am delighted to meet with a young man who can tell me about that personage. I want his influence in a rather serious matter, although it would cost him nothing to oblige me. It concerns a claim I wish to press on the American government. I should be glad to obtain information about Monsieur de Sérizy."

"Oh! if you want to succeed," replied Oscar, with a knowing look, "don't go to him, but go to his wife; he is madly in love with her; no one knows more than I do about that; but she can't endure him."

"Why not?" said Georges.

"The count has a skin disease which makes him hideous. Doctor Alibert has tried in vain to cure it. The count would give half his fortune if he had a chest like mine," said Oscar, swelling himself out. "He

lives a lonely life in his own house; gets up very early in the morning and works from three to eight o'clock; after eight he takes his remedies, — sulphur-baths, steam-baths, and such things. His valet bakes him in a sort of iron box — for he is always in hopes of getting cured."

"If he is such a friend of the King as they say he is, why does n't he get his Majesty to touch him?" asked Georges.

"The count has lately promised thirty thousand francs to a celebrated Scotch doctor who is coming over to treat him," continued Oscar.

"Then his wife can't be blamed if she finds better —" said Schinner, but he did not finish his sentence.

"I should say so!" resumed Oscar. "The poor man is so shrivelled and old you would take him for eighty! He's as dry as a parchment, and, unluckily for him, he feels his position."

"Most men would," said Père Léger.

"He adores his wife and dares not find fault with her," pursued Oscar, rejoicing to have found a topic to which they listened. "He plays scenes with her which would make you die of laughing, — exactly like Arnolphe in Molière's comedy."

The count, horror-stricken, looked at Pierrotin, who, finding that the count said nothing, concluded that Madame Clapart's son was telling falsehoods.

"*Sa monsieur*," continued Oscar, "if you want the count's influence, I advise you to apply to the Marquis d'Aiglemont. If you get that former adorer of Madame de Sérizy on your side, you will win husband and wife at one stroke."

"Look here!" said the painter, "you seem to have seen the count without his clothes; are you his valet?"

"His valet!" cried Oscar.

"Hang it! people don't tell such things about their friends in public conveyances," exclaimed Mistigris. "As for me, I'm not listening to you; I'm deaf: 'discretion plays the better part of adder.'"

"'A poet is nasty and not fit,' and so is a tale-bearer," cried Schinner.

"Great painter," said Georges, sententiously, "learn this: you can't say harm of people you don't know. Now the little one here has proved, indubitably, that he knows his Sérizy by heart. If he had told us about the countess, perhaps —?"

"Stop! not a word about the Comtesse de Sérizy, young men," cried the count. "I am a friend of her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and whoever attempts to speak disparagingly of the countess must answer to me."

"Monsieur is right," cried the painter; "no man should *blaguer* women."

"God, Honor, and the Ladies! I believe in that melodrama," said Mistigris.

"I don't know the guerilla chieftain, Mina, but I know the Keeper of the Seals," continued the count, looking at Georges; "and though I don't wear my decorations," he added, looking at the painter, "I prevent those who do not deserve them from obtaining any. And finally, let me say that I know so many persons that I even know Monsieur Grindot, the architect of Presles. Pierrotin, stop at the next inn; I want to get out a moment."

Pierrotin hurried his horses through the village street of Moisselles, at the end of which was the inn where all travellers stopped. This short distance was done in silence.

"Where is that young fool going?" asked the count, drawing Pierrotin into the innyard.

"To your steward. He is the son of a poor lady who lives in the rue de la Cerisaie, to whom I often carry fruit, and game, and poultry from Presles. She is a Madame Husson."

"Who is that man?" inquired Père Léger of Pierrotin when the count had left him.

"Faith, I don't know," replied Pierrotin; "this is the first time I have driven him. I should n't be surprised if he was that prince who owns Maffliers. He has just told me to leave him on the road near there; he does n't want to go on to Isle-Adam."

"Pierrotin thinks he is the master of Maffliers," said Père Léger, addressing Georges when he got back into the coach.

The three young fellows were now as dull as thieves caught in the act; they dared not look at each other, and were evidently considering the consequences of their fibs.

"This is what is called 'suffering for license sake,' " said Mistigris.

"You see I did know the count," said Oscar.

"Possibly. But you'll never be an ambassador," replied Georges. "When people want to talk in public conveyances, they ought to be careful, like me, to talk without saying anything."

"That's what speech is for," remarked Mistigris, by way of conclusion.

The count returned to his seat and the *coucou* rolled on amid the deepest silence.

"Well, my friends," said the count, when they reached the Carreau woods, "here we all are, as silent as if we were going to the scaffold."

"'Silence gives content,' " muttered Mistigris.

"The weather is fine," said Georges.

"What place is that?" said Oscar, pointing to the château de Franconville, which produces a fine effect at that particular spot, backed, as it is, by the noble forest of Saint-Martin.

"How is it," cried the count, "that you, who say you go so often to Presles, do not know Franconville?"

"Monsieur knows men, not castles," said Mistigris.

"Budding diplomatists have so much else to take their minds," remarked Georges.

"Be so good as to remember my name," replied Oscar, furious. "I am Oscar Husson, and ten years hence I shall be famous."

After that speech, uttered with bombastic assumption, Oscar flung himself back in his corner.

"Husson of what, of where?" asked Mistigris.

"It is a great family," replied the count. "Husson de la Cerisaie; monsieur was born beneath the steps of the Imperial throne."

Oscar colored crimson to the roots of his hair, and was penetrated through and through with a dreadful foreboding.

They were now about to descend the steep hill of La Cave, at the foot of which, in a narrow valley, flanked by the forest of Saint-Martin, stands the magnificent château of Presles.

"Messieurs," said the count, "I wish you every good fortune in your various careers. Monsieur le colonel, make your peace with the King of France; the Czerni-Georges ought not to snub the Bourbons. I have nothing to wish for you, my dear Monsieur Schinner; your fame is already won, and nobly won by

splendid work. But you are much to be feared in domestic life, and I, being a married man, dare not invite you to my house. As for Monsieur Husson, he needs no protection; he possesses the secrets of statesmen and can make them tremble. Monsieur Léger is about to pluck the Comte de Sérizy, and I can only exhort him to do it with a firm hand. Pierrotin, put me out here, and pick me up at the same place to-morrow," added the count, who then left the coach and took a path through the woods, leaving his late companions confused and bewildered.

"He must be that count who has hired Franconville; that's the path to it," said Léger.

"If ever again," said the false Schinner, "I am caught *blague*-ing in a public coach, I'll fight a duel with myself. It was your fault, Mistigris," giving his *rapin* a tap on the head.

"All I did was to help you out, and follow you to Venice," said Mistigris; "but that's always the way, 'Fortune belabors the slave.'"

"Let me tell you," said Georges to his neighbor Oscar, "that if, by chance, that was the Comte de Sérizy, I wouldn't be in your skin for a good deal, healthy as you think it."

Oscar, remembering his mother's injunctions, which these words recalled to his mind, turned pale and came to his senses.

"Here you are, messieurs!" cried Pierrotin, pulling up at a fine iron gate.

"Here we are — where?" said the painter, and Georges, and Oscar all at once.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Pierrotin, "if that does n't beat all! *Ah ça*, messieurs, have none of you been here before? Why, this is the château de Presles."

"Oh, yes; all right, friend," said Georges, recovering his audacity. "But I happen to be going on to Les Moulineaux," he added, not wishing his companions to know that he was really going to the château.

"You don't say so? Then you are coming to me," said Père Léger.

"How so?"

"Why, I'm the farmer at Moulineaux. Hey, colonel, what brings you there?"

"To taste your butter," said Georges, pulling out his portfolio.

"Pierrotin," said Oscar, "leave my things at the steward's. I am going straight to the château."

Whereupon Oscar plunged into a narrow path, not knowing, in the least, where he was going.

"Hi! Monsieur l'ambassadeur," cried Père Léger, "that's the way to the forest; if you really want to get to the château, go through the little gate."

Thus compelled to enter, Oscar disappeared into the grand court-yard. While Père Léger stood watching

Oscar, Georges, utterly confounded by the discovery that the farmer was the present occupant of Les Mouligneaux, had slipped away so adroitly that when the fat countryman looked round for his colonel there was no sign of him.

The iron gates opened at Pierrotin's demand, and he proudly drove in to deposit with the concierge the thousand and one utensils belonging to the great Schinner. Oscar was thunderstruck when he became aware that Mistigris and his master, the witnesses of his bravado, were to be installed in the château itself. In ten minutes Pierrotin had discharged the various packages of the painter, the bundles of Oscar Husson, and the pretty little leather portmanteau, which he took from its nest of hay and confided mysteriously to the wife of the concierge. Then he drove out of the courtyard, cracking his whip, and took the road that led through the forest to Isle-Adam, his face beaming with the sly expression of a peasant who calculates his profits. Nothing was lacking now to his happiness; on the morrow he would have his thousand francs, and, as a consequence, his magnificent new coach.

VI.

THE MOREAU INTERIOR.

OSCAR, somewhat abashed, was skulking behind a clump of trees in the centre of the court-yard, and watching to see what became of his two road-companions, when Monsieur Moreau suddenly came out upon the portico from what was called the guard-room. He was dressed in a long blue overcoat which came to his heels, breeches of yellowish leather and top-boots, and in his hand he carried a riding-whip.

"Ah! my boy, so here you are? How is the dear mamma?" he said, taking Oscar by the hand. "Good-day, messieurs," he added to Mistigris and his master, who then came forward. "You are, no doubt, the two painters whom Monsieur Grindot, the architect, told me to expect."

He whistled twice at the end of his whip; the concierge came.

"Take these gentlemen to rooms 14 and 15. Madame Moreau will give you the keys. Go with them to show the way; make fires there, if necessary, and take up all their things. I have orders from Monsieur

le comte," he added, addressing the two young men, "to invite you to my table, messieurs; we dine at five, as in Paris. If you like hunting, you will find plenty to amuse you; I have a license from the Eaux et Forêts; and we hunt over twelve thousand acres of forest, not counting our own domain."

Oscar, the painter, and Mistigris, all more or less subdued, exchanged glances, but Mistigris, faithful to himself, remarked, in a low tone, "'Veni, vidi, cecidi, — I came, I saw, I slaughtered.'"

Oscar followed the steward, who led him along at a rapid pace through the park.

"Jacques," said Moreau to one of his children whom they met, "run in and tell your mother that little Husson has come, and say to her that I am obliged to go to Les Moulineaux for a moment."

The steward, then about fifty years old, was a dark man of medium height, and seemed stern. His bilious complexion, to which country habits had added a certain violent coloring, conveyed, at first sight, the impression of a nature which was other than his own. His blue eyes and a large crow-beaked nose gave him an air that was the more threatening because his eyes were placed too close together. But his large lips, the outline of his face, and the easy good-humor of his manner soon showed that his nature was a kindly one. Abrupt in speech and decided in tone, he impressed

Oscar immensely by the force of his penetration, inspired, no doubt, by the affection which he felt for the boy. Trained by his mother to magnify the steward, Oscar had always felt himself very small in Moreau's presence; but on reaching Presles a new sensation came over him, as if he expected some harm from this fatherly friend, his only protector.

"Well, my Oscar, you don't look pleased at getting here," said the steward. "And yet you'll find plenty of amusement; you shall learn to ride on horseback, and shoot, and hunt."

"I don't know any of those things," said Oscar, stupidly.

"But I brought you here to learn them."

"Mamma told me only to stay two weeks because of Madame Moreau."

"Oh! we'll see about that," replied Moreau, rather wounded that his conjugal authority was doubted.

Moreau's youngest son, an active, strapping lad of twelve, here ran up.

"Come," said his father, "take Oscar to your mother."

He himself went rapidly along the shortest path to the gamekeeper's house, which was situated between the park and the forest.

The pavilion, or lodge, in which the count had established his steward, was built a few years before the

Revolution. It stood in the centre of a large garden, one wall of which adjoined the court-yard of the stables and offices of the château itself. Formerly its chief entrance was on the main road to the village. But after the count's father bought the building, he closed that entrance and united the place with his own property.

The house, built of freestone, in the style of the period of Louis XV. (it is enough to say that its exterior decoration consisted of a stone drapery beneath the windows, as in the colonnades of the Place Louis XV., the flutings of which were stiff and ungainly), had on the ground-floor a fine salon opening into a bedroom, and a dining-room connected with a billiard-room. These rooms, lying parallel to one another, were separated by a staircase, in front of which was a sort of peristyle which formed an entrance-hall, on which the two suites of rooms on either side opened. The kitchen was beneath the dining-room, for the whole building was raised ten steps from the ground level.

By placing her own bedroom on the first floor above the ground-floor, Madame Moreau was able to transform the chamber adjoining the salon into a boudoir. These two rooms were richly furnished with beautiful pieces culled from the rare old furniture of the château. The salon, hung with blue and white damask, formerly the curtains of the state-bed, was draped with ample

portières and window curtains lined with white silk. Pictures, evidently from old panels, plant-stands, various pretty articles of modern upholstery, handsome lamps, and a rare old cut-glass chandelier, gave a *grandiose* appearance to the room. The carpet was a Persian rug. The boudoir, wholly modern, and furnished entirely after Madame Moreau's own taste, was arranged in imitation of a tent, with ropes of blue silk on a gray background. The classic divan was there, of course, with its pillows and footstools. The plant-stands, taken care of by the head-gardener of Presles, rejoiced the eye with their pyramids of bloom. The dining-room and billiard-room were furnished in mahogany.

. Around the house the steward's wife had laid out a beautiful garden, carefully cultivated, which opened into the great park. Groups of choice trees hid the offices and stables. To improve the entrance by which visitors came to see her, she had substituted a handsome iron gateway for the shabby railing, which she discarded.

The dependence in which the situation of their dwelling placed the Moreaus, was thus adroitly concealed, and they seemed all the more like rich and independent persons taking care of the property of a friend, because neither the count nor the countess ever came to Presles to take down their pretensions. More-

over, the perquisites granted by Monsieur de Sérizy allowed them to live in the midst of that abundance which is the luxury of country life. Milk, eggs, poultry, game, fruits, flowers, forage, vegetables, wood, the steward and his wife used in profusion, buying absolutely nothing but butcher's-meat, wines, and the colonial supplies required by their life of luxury. The poultry-maid baked their bread; and of late years Moreau had paid his butcher with pigs from the farm, after reserving those he needed for his own use.

On one occasion, the countess, always kind and good to her former maid, gave her, as a souvenir perhaps, a little travelling-carriage, the fashion of which was out of date. Moreau had it repainted, and now drove his wife about the country with two good horses which belonged to the farm. Besides these horses, Moreau had his own saddle-horse. He did enough farming on the count's property to keep the horses and maintain his servants. He stacked three hundred tons of excellent hay, but accounted for only one hundred, making use of a vague permission once granted by the count. He kept his poultry-yard, pigeon-cotes, and cattle at the cost of the estate, but the manure of the stables was used by the count's gardeners. All these little stealings had some ostensible excuse.

Madame Moreau had taken into her service a daugh-

ter of one of the gardeners, who was first her maid and afterwards her cook. The poultry-girl, also the dairy-maid, assisted in the work of the household; and the steward had hired a discharged soldier to groom the horses and do the heavy labor.

At Nerville, Chaumont, Maffliers, Nointel, and other places of the neighborhood, the handsome wife of the steward was received by persons who either did not know, or pretended not to know her previous condition. Moreau did services to many persons. He induced his master to agree to certain things which seem trifles in Paris, but are really of immense importance in the country. After bringing about the appointment of a certain *juge de paix* at Beaumont and also at Isle-Adam, he had, in the same year, prevented the dismissal of a keeper-general of the Forests, and obtained the cross of the Legion of honor for the first cavalry-sergeant at Beaumont. Consequently, no festivity was ever given among the *bourgeoisie* to which Monsieur and Madame Moreau were not invited. The rector of Presles and the mayor of Presles came every evening to play cards with them. It is difficult for a man not to be kind and hospitable after feathering his nest so comfortably.

A pretty woman, and an affected one, as all retired waiting-maids of great ladies are, for after they are married they imitate their mistresses, Madame Moreau

imported from Paris all the new fashions. She wore expensive boots, and never was seen on foot, except, occasionally, in the finest weather. Though her husband allowed but five hundred francs a year for her toilet, that sum is immense in the provinces, especially if well laid out. So that Madame Moreau, fair, ruddy, and fresh, about thirty-six years of age, still slender and delicate in shape in spite of her three children, played the young girl and gave herself the airs of a princess. If, when she drove by in her *calèche*, some stranger had asked, "Who is she?" Madame Moreau would have been furious had she heard the reply: "The wife of the steward at Presles." She wished to be taken for the mistress of the château. In the villages, she patronized the people in the tone of a great lady. The influence of her husband over the count, proved in so many ways, prevented the small *bourgeoisie* from laughing at Madame Moreau, who, in the eyes of the peasants, was really a personage.

Estelle (her name was Estelle) took no more part in the affairs of the stewardship than the wife of a broker does in her husband's affairs at the Bourse. She even depended on Moreau for the care of the household and their own fortune. Confident of his *means*, she was a thousand leagues from dreaming that this comfortable existence, which had lasted for seventeen years, could

ever be endangered. And yet, when she heard of the count's determination to restore the magnificent château, she felt that her enjoyments were threatened, and she urged her husband to come to the arrangement with Léger about Les Moulineaux, so that they might retire from Presles and live at Isle-Adam. She had no intention of returning to a position that was more or less that of a servant in presence of her former mistress, who, indeed, would have laughed to see her established in the lodge with all the airs and graces of a woman of the world.

The rancorous enmity which existed between the Reyberts and the Moreaus came from a wound inflicted by Madame de Reybert upon Madame Moreau on the first occasion when the latter assumed precedence over the former on her first arrival at Presles, the wife of the steward being determined not to allow her supremacy to be undermined by a woman *née* de Corroy. Madame de Reybert thereupon reminded, or, perhaps, informed the whole country-side of Madame Moreau's former station. The words "waiting-maid" flew from lip to lip. The envious acquaintances of the Moreaus throughout the neighborhood from Beaumont to Moisselles, began to carp and criticise with such eagerness that a few sparks of the conflagration fell into the Moreau household. For four years the Reyberts, cut dead by the handsome Estelle, found themselves the

objects of so much animadversion on the part of the adherents of the Moreaus that their position at Presles would not have been endurable without the thought of vengeance which had, so far, supported them.

The Moreaus, who were very friendly with Grindot the architect, had received notice from him of the early arrival of two painters sent down to finish the decorations of the château, the principal paintings for which were just completed by Schinner. The great painter had recommended for this work the artist who was accompanied by Mistigris. For two days past Madame Moreau had been on the tiptoe of expectation, and had put herself under arms to receive him. An artist, who was to be her guest and companion for weeks, demanded some effort. Schinner and his wife had their own apartment at the château, where, by the count's express orders, they were treated with all the consideration due to himself. Grindot, who stayed at the steward's house, showed such respect for the great artist that neither the steward nor his wife had attempted to put themselves on familiar terms with him. Moreover, the noblest and richest people in the surrounding country had vied with each other in paying attention to Schinner and his wife. So, very well pleased to have, as it were, a little revenge of her own, Madame Moreau was determined to cry up the artist she was now expecting, and to present him

to her social circle as equal in talent to the great Schinner.

Though for two days past Moreau's pretty wife had arrayed herself coquettishly, the prettiest of her toilets had been reserved for this very Saturday, when, as she felt no doubt, the artist would arrive for dinner. A pink gown in very narrow stripes, a pink belt with a richly chased gold buckle, a velvet ribbon and cross at her throat, and velvet bracelets on her bare arms (Madame de Sérizy had handsome arms and showed them much), together with bronze kid shoes and thread stockings, gave Madame Moreau all the appearance of an elegant Parisian. She wore, also, a superb bonnet of Leghorn straw, trimmed with a bunch of moss roses from Nattier's, beneath the spreading sides of which rippled the curls of her beautiful blond hair.

After ordering a very choice dinner and reviewing the condition of her rooms, she walked about the grounds, so as to be seen standing near a flower-bed in the court-yard of the château, like the mistress of the house, on the arrival of the coach from Paris. She held above her head a charming rose-colored parasol lined with white silk and fringed. Seeing that Pierrotin merely left Mistigris's queer packages with the concierge, having, apparently, brought no passengers, Estelle retired disappointed and regretting the trouble of making her useless toilet. Like many persons

who are dressed in their best, she felt incapable of any other occupation than that of sitting idly in her salon awaiting the coach from Beaumont, which usually passed about an hour after that of Pierrotin, though it did not leave Paris till mid-day. She was, therefore, in her own apartment when the two artists walked up to the château, and were sent by Moreau himself to their rooms where they made their regulation toilet for dinner. The pair had asked questions of their guide, the gardener, who told them so much of Madame Moreau's beauty that they felt the necessity of "rigging themselves up" (studio slang). They, therefore, put on their most superlative suits and then walked over to the steward's lodge, piloted by Jacques Moreau, the eldest son, a hardy youth, dressed like an English boy in a handsome jacket with a turned-over collar, who was spending his vacation like a fish in water on the estate where his father and mother reigned as autocrats.

"Mamma," he said, "here are the two artists sent down by Monsieur Schinner."

Madame Moreau, agreeably surprised, rose, told her son to place chairs, and began to display her graces.

"Mamma, the Husson boy is with papa," added the lad; "shall I fetch him?"

"You need not hurry; go and play with him," said his mother.

The remark "you need not hurry" proved to the two artists the unimportance of their late travelling companion in the eyes of their hostess; but it also showed, what they did not know, the feeling of a step-mother against a step-son. Madame Moreau, after seventeen years of married life, could not be ignorant of the steward's attachment to Madame Clapart and the little Husson, and she hated both mother and child so vehemently that it is not surprising that Moreau had never before risked bringing Oscar to Presles.

"We are requested, my husband and myself," she said to the two artists, "to do you the honors of the château. We both love art, and, above all, artists," she added in a mincing tone; "and I beg you to make yourselves at home here. In the country, you know, every one should be at their ease; one must feel wholly at liberty, or life is *too* insipid. We have already had Monsieur Schinner with us."

Mistigris gave a sly glance at his companion.

"You know him, of course?" continued Estelle, after a slight pause.

"Who does not know him, madame?" said the painter.

"Knows him like his double," remarked Mistigris.

"Monsieur Grindot told me your name," said Madame Moreau to the painter. "But—"

"Joseph Bridau," he replied, wondering with what sort of woman he had to do.

Mistigris began to rebel internally against the patronizing manner of the steward's wife; but he waited, like Bridau, for some word which might give him his cue; one of those words *de singe à dauphin* which artists, cruel, born-observers of the ridiculous—the pabulum of their pencils—seize with such avidity. Meantime Estelle's clumsy hands and feet struck their eyes, and presently a word, a phrase or two, betraying her past, and quite out of keeping with the elegance of her dress, made the two young fellows aware of their prey. A single glance at each other was enough to arrange a scheme that they should take Estelle seriously on her own ground, and thus find amusement enough during the time of their stay.

“You say you love art, madame; perhaps you cultivate it successfully,” said Joseph Bridau.

“No. Without being neglected, my education was purely commercial; but I have so profound and delicate a sense of art that Monsieur Schinner always asked me, when he had finished a piece of work, to give him my opinion on it.”

“Just as Molière consulted La Forêt,” said Mistigris.

Not knowing that La Forêt was Molière's servant-woman, Madame Moreau inclined her head graciously, showing that in her ignorance she accepted the speech as a compliment.

"Did n't he propose to *croquer* you?" asked Bridau.
"Painters are eager enough after handsome women."

"What may you mean by such language?"

"In the studios we say *croquer*, craunch, nibble, for sketching," interposed Mistigris, with an insinuating air, "and we are always wanting to *croquer* beautiful heads. That's the origin of the expression, 'She is pretty enough to eat.'"

"I was not aware of the origin of the term," she replied, with the sweetest glance at Mistigris.

"My pupil here," said Bridau, "Monsieur Léon de Lora, shows a remarkable talent for portraiture. He would be too happy, I know, to leave you a souvenir of our stay by painting your charming head, madame."

Joseph Bridau made a sign to Mistigris which meant: "Come, sail in, and push the matter; she is not so bad in looks, this woman."

Accepting the glance, Léon de Lora slid down upon the sofa beside Estelle and took her hand, which she permitted.

"Oh! madame, if you would like to offer a surprise to your husband, and will give me a few secret sittings I would endeavor to surpass myself. You are so beautiful, so fresh, so charming! A man without any talent might become a genius in painting you. He would draw from your eyes —"

"We must paint your dear children in the arabesques," said Bridau, interrupting Mistigris.

"I would rather have them in the salon; but perhaps I am indiscreet in asking it," she replied, looking at Bridau coquettishly.

"Beauty, madame, is a sovereign whom all painters worship; it has unlimited claims upon them."

"They are both charming," thought Madame Moreau. "Do you enjoy driving? Shall I take you through the woods, after dinner, in my carriage?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Mistigris, in three ecstatic tones. "Why, Presles will prove our terrestrial paradise."

"With an Eve, a fair, young, fascinating woman," added Bridau.

Just as Madame Moreau was bridling, and soaring to the seventh heaven, she was recalled like a kite by a twitch at its line.

"Madame!" cried her maid-servant, bursting into the room.

"Rosalie," said her mistress, "who allowed you to come here without being sent for?"

Rosalie paid no heed to this rebuke, but whispered in her mistress's ear: —

"The count is at the château."

"Has he asked for me?" said the steward's wife.

"No, madame; but he wants his trunk and the key of his apartment."

"Then give them to him," she replied, making an impatient gesture to hide her real trouble.

"Mamma! here's Oscar Husson," said her youngest son, bringing in Oscar, who turned as red as a poppy on seeing the two artists in evening dress.

"Oh! so you have come, my little Oscar," said Estelle, stiffly. "I hope you will now go and dress," she added, after looking at him contemptuously from head to foot. "Your mother, I presume, has not accustomed you to dine in such clothes as those."

"Oh!" cried the cruel Mistigris, "a future diplomatist knows the saying that 'two coats are better than none.'"

"How do you mean, a future diplomatist?" exclaimed Madame Moreau.

Poor Oscar had tears in his eyes as he looked in turn from Joseph to Léon.

"Merely a joke made in travelling," replied Joseph, who wanted to save Oscar's feelings out of pity.

"The boy just wanted to be funny like the rest of us, and he *blagued*, that's all," said Mistigris.

"Madame," said Rosalie, returning to the door of the salon, "his Excellency has ordered dinner for eight, and wants it served at six o'clock. What are we to do?"

During Estelle's conference with her head-woman the two artists and Oscar looked at each other in consternation; their glances were expressive of terrible apprehension.

"His Excellency! who is he?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Why, Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, of course," replied little Moreau.

"Could it have been the count in the *coucou*?" said Léon de Lora.

"Oh!" exclaimed Oscar, "the Comte de Sérizy always travels in his own carriage with four horses.

"How did the Comte de Sérizy get here?" said the painter to Madame Moreau, when she returned, much discomfited, to the salon.

"I am sure I do not know," she said. "I cannot explain to myself this sudden arrival; nor do I know what has brought him — And Moreau not here!"

"His Excellency wishes Monsieur Schinner to come over to the château," said a gardener, coming to the door of the salon. "And he begs Monsieur Schinner to give him the pleasure to dine with him; also Monsieur Mistigris."

"Done for!" cried the *rapin*, laughing. "He whom we took for a *bourgeois* in the *coucou* was the count. You may well say: 'Sour are the curses of perversity.'"

Oscar was very nearly changed to a pillar of salt; for, at this revelation, his throat felt saltier than the sea.

"And you, who talked to him about his wife's lovers and his skin diseases!" said Mistigris, turning on Oscar.

"What does he mean?" exclaimed the steward's wife, gazing after the two artists, who went away laughing at the expression of Oscar's face.

Oscar remained dumb, confounded, stupefied, hearing nothing, though Madame Moreau questioned him and shook him violently by his arm, which she caught and squeezed. She gained nothing, however, and was forced to leave him in the salon without an answer, for Rosalie appeared again, to ask for linen and silver, and to beg she would go herself and see that the multiplied orders of the count were executed. All the household, together with the gardeners and the concierge and his wife, were going and coming in a confusion that may readily be imagined. The master had fallen upon his own house like a bombshell.

From the top of the hill near La Cave, where he left the coach, the count had gone, by a path through the woods well-known to him, to the house of his game-keeper. The keeper was amazed when he saw his real master.

"Is Moreau here?" said the count. "I see his horse."

"No, monseigneur; he means to go to Moulineaux before dinner, and he has left his horse here while he went to the château to give a few orders."

"If you value your place," said the count, "you will take that horse and ride at once to Beaumont, where

you will deliver to Monsieur Margueron the note that I shall now write."

So saying the count entered the keeper's lodge and wrote a line, folding it in a way impossible to open without detection, and gave it to the man as soon as he saw him in the saddle.

"Not a word to any one," he said, "and as for you, madame," he added to the gamekeeper's wife, "if Moreau comes back for his horse, tell him merely that I have taken it."

The count then crossed the park and entered the court-yard of the château through the iron gates. However worn-out a man may be by the wear and tear of public life, by his own emotions, by his own mistakes and disappointments, the soul of any man able to love deeply at the count's age is still young and sensitive to treachery. Monsieur de Sérizy had felt such pain at the thought that Moreau had deceived him, that even after hearing the conversation at Saint-Brice he thought him less an accomplice of Léger and the notary than their tool. On the threshold of the inn, and while that conversation was still going on, he thought of pardoning his steward after giving him a good reproof. Strange to say, the dishonesty of his confidential agent occupied his mind as a mere episode from the moment when Oscar revealed his infirmities. Secrets so carefully guarded could only have been revealed by Moreau,

who had, no doubt, laughed over the hidden troubles of his benefactor with either Madame de Sérizy's former maid or with the Aspasia of the Directory.

As he walked along the wood-path, this peer of France, this statesman, wept as young men weep; he wept his last tears. All human feelings were so cruelly hurt by one stroke that the usually calm man staggered through his park like a wounded deer.

When Moreau arrived at the gamekeeper's lodge and asked for his horse, the keeper's wife replied: —

"Monsieur le comte has just taken it."

"Monsieur le comte!" cried Moreau. "Whom do you mean?"

"Why, the Comte de Sérizy, our master," she replied. "He is probably at the château by this time," she added, anxious to be rid of the steward, who, unable to understand the meaning of her words, turned back towards the château.

But he presently turned again and came back to the lodge, intending to question the woman more closely; for he began to see something serious in this secret arrival, and the apparently strange method of his master's return. But the wife of the gamekeeper, alarmed to find herself caught in a vise between the count and his steward, had locked herself into the house, resolved not to open to any but her husband. Moreau, more and more uneasy, ran rapidly, in spite of

his boots and spurs, to the château, where he was told that the count was dressing.

"Seven persons invited to dinner!" cried Rosalie as soon as she saw him.

Moreau then went through the offices to his own house. On his way he met the poultry-girl, who was having an altercation with a handsome young man.

"Monsieur le comte particularly told me a colonel, an aide-de-camp of Mina," insisted the girl.

"I am not a colonel," replied Georges.

"But is n't your name Georges?"

"What's all this?" said the steward, intervening.

"Monsieur, my name is Georges Marest; I am the son of a rich wholesale ironmonger in the rue Saint-Martin; I come on business to Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy from Maître Crottat, a notary, whose second clerk I am."

"And I," said the girl, "am telling him that monseigneur said to me: 'There'll come a colonel named Czerni-Georges, aide-de-camp to Mina; he'll come by Pierrotin's coach; if he asks for me show him into the waiting-room.'"

"Evidently," said the clerk, "the count is a traveller who came down with us in Pierrotin's *coucou*; if it had n't been for the politeness of a young man he'd have come as a rabbit."

"A rabbit! in Pierrotin's *coucou*!" exclaimed Moreau and the poultry-girl together.

"I am sure of it, from what this girl is now saying," said Georges.

"How so?" asked the steward.

"Ah! that's the point," cried the clerk. "To hoax the travellers and have a bit of fun I told them a lot of stuff about Egypt and Greece and Spain. As I happened to be wearing spurs I gave myself out for a colonel of cavalry; pure nonsense!"

"Tell me," said Moreau, "what did this traveller you take to be Monsieur le comte look like?"

"Face like a brick," said Georges, "hair snow-white, and black eyebrows."

"That is he!"

"Then I'm lost!" exclaimed Georges.

"Why?"

"Oh! I chaffed him about his decorations."

"Pooh! he's a good fellow; you probably amused him. Come at once to the château. I'll go in and see his Excellency. Where did you say he left the coach?"

"At the top of the mountain."

"I don't know what to make of it!"

"After all," thought Georges, "though I did *blague* him, I didn't say anything insulting."

"Why have you come here?" asked the steward.

"I have brought the deed of sale for the farm at Moulineaux, all ready for signature."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the steward, "I don't understand one word of all this!"

Moreau felt his heart beat painfully when, after giving two raps on his master's door, he heard the words: —

"Is that you, *Monsieur* Moreau?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Come in."

The count was now wearing a pair of white trousers and thin boots, a white waistcoat and a black coat on which shone the grand cross of the Legion upon the right breast, and fastened to a buttonhole on the left was the order of the Golden Fleece hanging by a short gold chain. He had arranged his hair himself, and had, no doubt, put himself in full dress to do the honors of Presles to Monsieur Margueron; and, possibly, to impress the good man's mind with a prestige of grandeur.

"Well, monsieur," said the count, who remained seated, leaving Moreau to stand before him. "We have not concluded that purchase from Margueron."

"He asks too much for the farm at the present moment."

"But why is he not coming to dinner as I requested?"

"Monseigneur, he is ill."

"Are you sure?"

"I have just come from there."

"Monsieur," said the count, with a stern air which was really terrible, "what would you do with a man whom you trusted, if, after seeing you dress wounds which you desired to keep secret from all the world, he should reveal your misfortunes and laugh at your malady with a strumpet?"

"I would thrash him for it."

"And if you discovered that he was also betraying your confidence and robbing you?"

"I should endeavor to detect him, and send him to the galleys."

"Monsieur Moreau, listen to me. You have undoubtedly spoken of my infirmities to Madame Clapart; you have laughed at her house, and with her, over my attachment to the Comtesse de Sérizy; for her son, little Husson, told a number of circumstances relating to my medical treatment, to travellers by a public conveyance in my presence, and Heaven knows in what language! He dared to calumniate my wife. Besides this, I learned from the lips of Père Léger himself, who was in the coach, of the plan laid by the notary at Beaumont and by you and by himself in relation to Les Moulineaux. If you have been, as you say, to Monsieur Margueron, it was to tell him to feign illness. He is so little ill that he is coming here to dinner this evening. Now, monsieur, I could pardon

your having made two hundred and fifty thousand francs out of your situation in seventeen years, — I can understand that. You might each time have asked me for what you took, and I would have given it to you; but let that pass. You have been, notwithstanding this disloyalty, better than others, as I believe. But that you, who knew my toil for our country, for France, you have seen me giving night after night to the Emperor's service, and working eighteen hours of each twenty-four for months together, you who knew my love for Madame de Sérizy, — that you should have gossiped about me before a boy! holding up my secrets and my affections to the ridicule of a Madame Husson! — ”

“Monseigneur!”

“It is unpardonable. To injure a man's interest, why, that is nothing; but to stab his heart! — Oh! you do not know what you have done!”

The count put his head in his hands and was silent for some moments.

“I leave you what you have gained,” he said after a time, “and I shall forget you. For my sake, for my dignity, and for your honor, we will part decently; for I cannot but remember even now what your father did for mine. You will explain the duties of the stewardship in a proper manner to Monsieur de Reybert, who succeeds you. Be calm, as I am. Give no

opportunity for fools to talk. Above all, let there be no recrimination or petty meanness. Though you no longer possess my confidence, endeavor to behave with the decorum of well-bred persons. As for that miserable boy who has wounded me to death, I will not have him sleep at Presles; send him to the inn; I will not answer for my own temper if I see him."

"I do not deserve such gentleness, monseigneur," said Moreau, with tears in his eyes. "Yes, you are right; if I had been utterly dishonest I should now be worth five hundred thousand francs instead of half that sum. I offer to give you an account of my fortune, with all its details. But let me tell you, monseigneur, that in talking of you with Madame Clapart, it was never in derision; but, on the contrary, to deplore your state, and to ask her for certain remedies, not used by physicians, but known to the common people. I spoke of your feelings before the boy, who was in his bed and, as I supposed, asleep (it seems he must have been awake and listening to us), with the utmost affection and respect. Alas! fate wills that indiscretions be punished like crimes. But while accepting the results of your just anger, I wish you to know what actually took place. It was, indeed, from heart to heart that I spoke of you to Madame Clapart. As for my wife, I have never said one word of these things — "

A Start in Life.

"Enough," said the count, whose conviction was now complete: "we are not children. All is now irrevocable. Put your affairs and mine in order. You can stay in the pavilion until October. Monsieur and Madame de Reybert will lodge for the present in the château; endeavor to keep on terms with them, like well-bred persons who hate each other, but still keep up appearances."

The count and Moreau went downstairs; Moreau white as the count's hair, the count himself calm and dignified.

During the time this interview lasted the Beaumont coach, which left Paris at one o'clock, had stopped before the gates of the château, and deposited Maître Crottat, the notary, who was shown, according to the count's orders, into the salon, where he found his clerk, extremely subdued in manner, and the two painters, all three of them painfully self-conscious and embarrassed. Monsieur de Reybert, a man of fifty, with a crabbed expression of face, was also there, accompanied by old Margueron and the notary of Beaumont, who held in his hand a bundle of deeds and other papers.

When these various personages saw the count in evening dress, and wearing his orders, Georges Marest had a slight sensation of colic, Joseph Bridau quivered, but Mistigris, who was conscious of being in

his Sunday clothes, and had, moreover, nothing on his conscience, remarked, in a sufficiently loud tone: —

“Well, he looks a great deal better like that.”

“Little scamp,” said the count, catching him by the ear, “we are both in the decoration business. I hope you recognize your own work, my dear Schinner,” he added, pointing to the ceiling of the salon.

“Monseigneur,” replied the artist, “I did wrong to take such a celebrated name out of mere bravado; but this day will oblige me to do fine things for you, and so bring credit on my own name of Joseph Bridau.”

“You took up my defence,” said the count, hastily; “and I hope you will give me the pleasure of dining with me, as well as my lively friend Mistigris.”

“Your Excellency does n't know to what you expose yourself,” said the saucy *rapin*; “‘*facilis descensus victuali*,’ as we say at the Black Hen.”

“Bridau!” exclaimed the minister, struck by a sudden thought. “Are you any relation to one of the most devoted toilers under the Empire, the head of a bureau, who fell a victim to his zeal?”

“His son, monseigneur,” replied Joseph, bowing.

“Then you are most welcome here,” said the count, taking Bridau's hand in both of his. “I knew your father, and you can count on me as on — on an uncle in America,” added the count, laughing. “But you are too young to have pupils of your own; to whom does Mistigris really belong?”

"To my friend Schinner, who lent him to me," said Joseph. "Mistigris' name is Léon de Lora. Monseigneur, if you knew my father, will you deign to think of his other son, who is now accused of plotting against the State, and is soon to be tried before the Court of Peers?"

"Ah! that's true," said the count. "Yes, I will think about it, be sure of that. As for Colonel Czerni-Georges, the friend of Ali Pacha, and Mins's aide-de-camp — " he continued, walking up to Georges.

"He! why that's my second clerk!" cried Crottat.

"You are quite mistaken, Maître Crottat," said the count, assuming a stern air. "A clerk who intends to be a notary does not leave important deeds in a diligence at the mercy of other travellers; neither does he spend twenty francs between Paris and Moisselles; or expose himself to be arrested as a deserter —"

"Monseigneur," said Georges Marest, "I may have amused myself with the *bourgeois* in the diligence, but —"

"Let his Excellency finish what he was saying," said the notary, digging his elbow into his clerk's ribs.

"A notary," continued the count, "ought to practise discretion, shrewdness, caution from the start; he should be incapable of such a blunder as taking a peer of France for a tallow-chandler —"

"I am willing to be blamed for my faults," said

Georges; "but I never left my deeds at the mercy of —"

"Now you are committing the fault of contradicting the word of a minister of State, a gentleman, an old man, and a client," said the count. "Give me that deed of sale."

Georges turned over and over the papers in his portfolio.

"That will do; don't disarrange those papers," said the count, taking the deed from his pocket. "Here is what you are looking for."

Crottat turned the paper back and forth, so astonished was he at receiving it from the hands of his client.

"What does this mean, monsieur?" he said, finally, to Georges.

"If I had not taken it," said the count, "Père Léger, — who is by no means such a ninny as you thought him from his questions about agriculture, by which he showed that he attended to his own business, — Père Léger might have seized that paper and guessed my purpose. You must give me the pleasure of dining with me, but on one condition, — that of describing, as you promised, the execution of the Muslim of Smyrna, and you must also finish the memoirs of some client which you have certainly read to be so well informed."

"*Schlague* for *blague*!" said Léon de Lora, in a whisper, to Joseph Bridau.

"Gentlemen," said the count to the two notaries and Messieurs Margueron and de Reybert, "let us go into the next room and conclude this business before dinner, because, as my friend Mistigris would say: 'Qui esurit consentit.'"

"Well, he is very good-natured," said Léon de Lora to Georges, Marest, when the count had left the room.

"Yes, *he* may be, but my master is n't," said Georges, "and he will request me to go and *blaguer* somewhere else."

"Never mind, you like travel," said Bridau.

"What a dressing that boy will get from Monsieur and Madame Moreau!" cried Mistigris.

"Little idiot!" said Georges. "If it had n't been for him the count would have been amused. Well, anyhow, the lesson is a good one; and if ever again I am caught bragging in a public coach —"

"It is a stupid thing to do," said Joseph Bridau.

"And common," added Mistigris. "'Vulgarity is the brother of pretension.'"

While the matter of the sale was being settled between Monsieur Margueron and the Comte de Sérizy, assisted by their respective notaries in presence of Monsieur de Reybert, the ex-steward walked with slow steps to his own house. There he entered the

salon and sat down without noticing anything. Little Husson, who was present, slipped into a corner, out of sight, so much did the livid face of his mother's friend alarm him.

"Eh! my friend!" said Estelle, coming into the room, somewhat tired with what she had been doing. "What is the matter?"

"My dear, we are lost, — lost beyond recovery. I am no longer steward of Presles, no longer in the count's confidence."

"Why not?"

"Père Léger, who was in Pierrotin's coach, told the count all about the affair of Les Moulineaux. But that is not the thing that has cost me his favor."

"What, then?"

"Oscar spoke ill of the countess, and he told about the count's diseases."

"Oscar!" cried Madame Moreau. "Ah! my dear, your sin has found you out. It was well worth while to warm that young serpent in your bosom. How often I have told you —"

"Enough!" said Moreau, in a strained voice.

At this moment Estelle and her husband discovered Oscar cowering in his corner. Moreau swooped down on the luckless lad like a hawk on its prey, took him by the collar of his coat and dragged him to the light of a window. "Speak! what did you say to mon-

seigneur in that coach? What demon let loose your tongue, you who keep a doltish silence whenever I speak to you? What did you do it for?" cried the steward, with frightful violence.

Too bewildered to weep, Oscar was dumb and motionless as a statue.

"Come with me and beg his Excellency's pardon," said Moreau.

"As if his Excellency cares for a little toad like that!" cried the furious Estelle.

"Come, I say, to the chateau," repeated Moreau.

Oscar dropped like an inert mass to the ground.

"Come!" cried Moreau, his anger increasing at every instant.

"No! no! mercy!" cried Oscar, who could not bring himself to submit to a torture that seemed to him worse than death.

Moreau then took the lad by his coat, and dragged him, as he might a dead body, through the yards, which rang with the boy's outcries and sobs. He pulled him up the portico, and, with an arm that fury made powerful, he flung him, bellowing, and rigid as a pole, into the salon, at the very feet of the count, who, having completed the purchase of Les Mouligneaux, was about to leave the salon for the dining-room with his guests.

"On your knees, wretched boy! and ask pardon of

him who gave food to your mind by obtaining your scholarship."

Oscar, his face to the ground, was foaming with rage, and did not say a word. The spectators of the scene were shocked. Moreau seemed no longer in his senses; his face was crimson with injected blood.

"This young man is a mere lump of vanity," said the count, after waiting a moment for Oscar's excuses. "A proud man humiliates himself because he sees there is grandeur in a certain self-abasement. I am afraid that you will never make much of that lad."

So saying, his Excellency passed on. Moreau took Oscar home with him; and on the way gave orders that the horses should immediately be put to Madame Moreau's *calèche*.

VII.

A MOTHER'S TRIALS.

WHILE the horses were being harnessed, Moreau wrote the following letter to Madame Clapart: —

MY DEAR, — Oscar has ruined me. During his journey in Pierrotin's coach, he spoke of Madame de Sérizy's behavior to his Excellency, who was travelling incognito, and actually told, to himself, the secret of his terrible malady. After dismissing me from my stewardship, the count told me not to let Oscar sleep at Presles, but to send him away immediately. Therefore, to obey his orders, the horses are being harnessed at this moment to my wife's carriage, and Brochon, my stable-man, will take the miserable child to you to-night.

We are, my wife and I, in a distress of mind which you may perhaps imagine, though I cannot describe it to you. I will see you in a few days, for I must take another course. I have three children, and I ought to consider their future. At present I do not know what to do; but I shall certainly endeavor to make the count aware of what seventeen years of the life of a man like myself is worth. Owning at the present moment about two hundred and fifty thousand francs, I want to raise myself to a fortune which may some day make me the equal of his Excellency. At this moment I feel within me the power to move mountains and van-

quish insurmountable difficulties. What a lever is such a scene of bitter humiliation as I have just passed through! Whose blood has Oscar in his veins? His conduct has been that of a blockhead; up to this moment when I write to you, he has not said a word nor answered, even by a sign, the questions my wife and I have put to him. Will he become an idiot? or is he one already? Dear friend, why did you not instruct him as to his behavior before you sent him to me? How many misfortunes you would have spared me, had you brought him here yourself as I begged you to do. If Estelle alarmed you, you might have stayed at Moisselles. However, the thing is done, and there is no use talking about it.

Adieu; I shall see you soon.

Your devoted servant and friend,

MOREAU.

At eight o'clock that evening, Madame Clapart, just returned from a walk she had taken with her husband, was knitting winter socks for Oscar, by the light of a single candle. Monsieur Clapart was expecting a friend named Poiret, who often came in to play dominoes, for never did he allow himself to spend an evening at a café. In spite of the prudent economy to which his small means forced him, Clapart would not have answered for his temperance amid a luxury of food and in presence of the usual guests of a café whose inquisitive observation would have piqued him.

"I'm afraid Poiret came while we were out," said Clapart to his wife.

"Why, no, my friend; the portress would have told us so when we came in," replied Madame Clapart.

"She may have forgotten it."

"What makes you think so?"

"It wouldn't be the first time she has forgotten things for us, — for God knows how people without means are treated."

"Well," said the poor woman, to change the conversation and escape Clapart's cavilling, "Oscar must be at Presles by this time. How he will enjoy that fine house and the beautiful park."

"Oh! yes," snarled Clapart, "you expect fine things of him; but, mark my words, there'll be squabbles wherever he goes."

"Will you never cease to find fault with that poor child?" said the mother. "What has he done to you? If some day we should live at our ease, we may owe it all to him; he has such a good heart —"

"Our bones will be jelly long before that fellow makes his way in the world," cried Clapart. "You don't know your own child; he is conceited, boastful, deceitful, lazy, incapable of —"

"Why don't you go to meet Poiret?" said the poor mother, struck to the heart by the diatribe she had brought upon herself.

"A boy who has never won a prize at school!" continued Clapart.

To *bourgeois* eyes, the obtaining of school prizes means the certainty of a fine future for the fortunate child.

"Did you win any?" asked his wife. "Oscar stood second in philosophy."

This remark imposed silence for a moment on Clapart; but presently he began again.

"Besides, Madame Moreau hates him like poison, you know why. She'll try to set her husband against him. Oscar to step into his shoes as steward of Presles! Why he'd have to learn agriculture, and know how to survey."

"He can learn."

"He — that pussy-cat! I'll bet that if he does get a place down there, it won't be a week before he does some doltish thing which will make the count dismiss him."

"Good God! how can you be so bitter against a poor child who is full of good qualities, sweet-tempered as an angel, incapable of doing harm to any one, no matter who."

Just then the cracking of a postilion's whip and the noise of a carriage stopping before the house was heard, this arrival having apparently put the whole street into a commotion. Clapart, who heard the opening of many windows, looked out himself to see what was happening.

"They have sent Oscar back to you in a post-chaise," he cried, in a tone of satisfaction, though in truth he felt inwardly uneasy.

"Good heavens! what can have happened to him?" cried the poor mother, trembling like a leaf shaken by the autumn wind.

Brochon here came up, followed by Oscar and Poiret.

"What has happened?" repeated the mother, addressing the stable-man.

"I don't know; but Monsieur Moreau is no longer steward of Presles, and they say your son has caused it. His Excellency ordered that he should be sent home to you. Here's a letter from poor Monsieur Moreau, madame, which will tell you all. You never saw a man so changed in a single day."

"Clapart, two glasses of wine for the postilion and for monsieur!" cried the mother, flinging herself into a chair that she might read the fatal letter. "Oscar," she said, staggering towards her bed, "do you want to kill your mother? After all the cautions that I gave you this morning —"

She did not end her sentence, for she fainted from distress of mind. When she came to herself she heard her husband saying to Oscar, as he shook him by the arm: —

"Will you answer me?"

"Go to bed, monsieur," she said to her son. "Let him alone, Monsieur Clapart. Don't drive him out of his senses; he is frightfully changed."

Oscar did not hear his mother's last words; he had slipped away to bed the instant that he got the order.

Those who remember their youth will not be surprised to learn that after a day so filled with events and emotions, Oscar, in spite of the enormity of his offences, slept the sleep of the just. The next day he did not find the world so changed as he thought it; he was surprised to be very hungry, — he who the night before had regarded himself as unworthy to live. He had only suffered mentally. At his age mental impressions succeed each other so rapidly that the last weakens its predecessor, however deeply the first may have been cut in. For this reason corporal punishment, though philanthropists are deeply opposed to it in these days, becomes necessary in certain cases for certain children. It is, moreover, the most natural form of retribution, for Nature herself employs it; she uses pain to impress a lasting memory of her precepts. If to the shame of the preceding evening, unhappily too transient, the steward had joined some personal chastisement, perhaps the lesson might have been complete. The discernment with which such punishment needs to be administered is the greatest argument against it. Nature is never mistaken; but the teacher is, and frequently.

Madame Clapart took pains to send her husband out, so that she might be alone with her son the next morning. She was in a state to excite pity. Her eyes, worn with tears; her face, weary with the fatigue of a sleepless night; her feeble voice, — in short, everything about her proved an excess of suffering she could not have borne a second time, and appealed to sympathy.

When Oscar entered the room she signed to him to sit down beside her, and reminded him in a gentle but grieved voice of the benefits they had so constantly received from the steward of Presles. She told him that they had lived, especially for the last six years, on the delicate charity of Monsieur Moreau; and that Monsieur Clapart's salary, also the *demi-bourse*, or scholarship, by which he (Oscar) had obtained an education, was due to the Comte de Sérizy. Most of this would now cease. Monsieur Clapart, she said, had no claim to a pension, — his period of service not being long enough to obtain one. On the day when he was no longer able to keep his place, what would become of them?

“For myself,” she said, “by nursing the sick, or living as housekeeper in some great family, I could support myself and Monsieur Clapart; but you, Oscar, what could you do? You have no means, and you must earn some, for you must live. There are but four careers for a young man like you, — commerce, govern-

ment employment, the licensed professions, or military service. All forms of commerce need capital, and we have none to give you. In place of capital, a young man can only give devotion and his capacity. But commerce also demands the utmost discretion, and your conduct yesterday proves that you lack it. To enter a government office, you must go through a long probation by the help of influence, and you have just alienated the only protector that we had, — a most powerful one. Besides, suppose you were to meet with some extraordinary help, by which a young man makes his way promptly either in business or in the public employ, where could you find the money to live and clothe yourself during the time that you are learning your employment?"

Here the mother wandered, like other women, into wordy lamentation: What should she do now to feed the family, deprived of the benefits Moreau's stewardship had enabled him to send her from Presles? Oscar had overthrown his benefactor's prosperity! As commerce and a government clerkship were now impossible, there remained only the professions of notary and lawyer, either barristers or solicitors, and sheriffs. But for those he must study at least three years, and pay considerable sums for entrance fees, examinations, certificates, and diplomas; and here again the question of maintenance presented itself.

"Oscar," she said, in conclusion, "in you I had put all my pride, all my life. In accepting for myself an unhappy old age, I fastened my eyes on you; I saw you with the prospect of a fine career, and I imagined you succeeding in it. That thought, that hope, gave me courage to face the privations I have endured for six years in order to carry you through school, where you have cost me, in spite of the scholarship, between seven and eight hundred francs a year. Now that my hope is vanishing, your future terrifies me. I cannot take one penny from Monsieur Clapart's salary for my son. What can you do? You are not strong enough in mathematics to enter any of the technical schools; and, besides, where could I get the three thousand francs board-money which they exact? This is life as it is, my child. You are eighteen; you are strong. Enlist in the army; it is your only means, that I can see, to earn your bread."

Oscar knew as yet nothing whatever of life. Like all children who have been kept from a knowledge of the trials and poverty of the home, he was ignorant of the necessity of earning his living. The word "commerce" presented no idea whatever to his mind; "public employment" said almost as little, for he saw no results of it. He listened, therefore, with a submissive air, which he tried to make humble, to his mother's exhortations, but they were lost in the void,

and did not reach his mind. Nevertheless, the word "army," the thought of being a soldier, and the sight of his mother's tears did at last make him cry. No sooner did Madame Clapart see the drops coursing down his cheeks than she felt herself helpless, and, like most mothers in such cases, she began the peroration which terminates these scenes, — scenes in which they suffer their own anguish and that of their children also.

"Well, Oscar, *promise* me that you will be more discreet in future, — that you will not talk heedlessly any more, but will strive to repress your silly vanity," *et cetera, et cetera*.

Oscar of course promised all his mother asked him to promise, and then, after gently drawing him to her, Madame Clapart ended by kissing him to console him for being scolded.

"In future," she said, "you will listen to your mother, and will follow her advice; for a mother can give nothing but good counsel to her child. We will go and see your uncle Cardot; that is our last hope. Cardot owed a great deal to your father, who gave him his sister, Mademoiselle Husson, with an enormous dowry for those days, which enabled him to make a large fortune in the silk trade. I think he might, perhaps, place you with Monsieur Camusot, his successor and son-in-law, in the rue des Bourdonnais. But, you

see, your uncle Cardot has four children. He gave his establishment, the Cocon d'Or, to his eldest daughter, Madame Camusot; and though Camusot has millions, he has also four children by two wives; and, besides, he scarcely knows of our existence. Cardot has married his second daughter, Mariane, to Monsieur Protèz, of the firm of Protèz and Chiffreville. The practice of his eldest son, the notary, cost him four hundred thousand francs; and he has just put his second son, Joseph, into the drug business of Matifat. So you see, your uncle Cardot has many reasons not to take an interest in you, whom he sees only four times a year. He has never come to call upon me here, though he was ready enough to visit me at Madame Mère's when he wanted to sell his silks to the Emperor, the imperial highnesses, and all the great people at court. But now the Camusots have turned ultras. The eldest son of Camusot's first wife married a daughter of one of the king's ushers. The world is mighty hump-backed when it stoops! However, it was a clever thing to do, for the Cocon d'Or has the custom of the present court as it had that of the Emperor. But to-morrow we will go and see your uncle Cardot, and I hope that you will endeavor to behave properly; for, as I said before, and I repeat it, that is our last hope."

Monsieur Jean-Jérôme-Séverin Cardot had been a widower six years. As head-clerk of the Cocon d'Or,

one of the oldest firms in Paris, he had bought the establishment in 1793, at a time when the heads of the house were ruined by the maximum; and the money of Mademoiselle Husson's dowry had enabled him to do this, and so make a fortune that was almost colossal in ten years. To establish his children richly during his lifetime, he had conceived the idea of buying an annuity for himself and his wife with three hundred thousand francs, which gave him an income of thirty thousand francs a year. He then divided his capital into three shares of four hundred thousand francs each, which he gave to three of his children,—the Cocond'Or, given to his eldest daughter on her marriage, being the equivalent of a fourth share. Thus the worthy man, who was now nearly seventy years old, could spend his thirty thousand a year as he pleased, without feeling that he injured the prospects of his children, all finely provided for, whose attentions and proofs of affection were, moreover, not prompted by self-interest.

Uncle Cardot lived at Belleville, in one of the first houses above the Courtille. He there occupied, on the first floor, an apartment overlooking the valley of the Seine, with a southern exposure, and the exclusive enjoyment of a large garden, for the sum of a thousand francs a year. He troubled himself not at all about the three or four other tenants of the same vast country-

house. Certain, through a long lease, of ending his days there, he lived rather plainly, served by an old cook and the former maid of the late Madame Cardot, — both of whom expected to reap an annuity of some six hundred francs apiece on the old man's death. These two women took the utmost care of him, and were all the more interested in doing so because no one was ever less fussy or less fault-finding than he. The apartment, furnished by the late Madame Cardot, had remained in the same condition for the last six years, — the old man being perfectly contented with it. He spent in all not more than three thousand francs a year there ; for he dined in Paris five days in the week, and returned home at midnight in a hackney-coach, which belonged to an establishment at Courtille. The cook had only her master's breakfast to provide on those days. This was served at eleven o'clock ; after that he dressed and perfumed himself, and departed for Paris. Usually, a *bourgeois* gives notice in the household if he dines out ; old Cardot, on the contrary, gave notice when he dined at home.

This little old man — fat, rosy, squat, and strong — always looked, in popular speech, as if he had stepped from a bandbox. He appeared in black silk stockings, breeches of *pou-de-soie* (paduasoy), a white piqué waistcoat, dazzling shirt-front, a blue-bottle coat, violet silk gloves, gold buckles to his shoes and his breeches,

and, lastly, a touch of powder and a little queue tied with black ribbon. His face was remarkable for a pair of eyebrows as thick as bushes, beneath which sparkled his gray eyes; and for a square nose, thick and long, which gave him somewhat the air of the abbés of former times. His countenance did not belie him. Père Cardot belonged to that race of lively *Gérontes* which is now disappearing rapidly, though it once served as *Turcarets* to the comedies and tales of the eighteenth century. Uncle Cardot always said "Fair lady," and he placed in their carriages, and otherwise paid attention to those women whom he saw without protectors; he "placed himself at their disposition," as he said, in his chivalrous way.

But beneath his calm air and his snowy poll he concealed an old age almost wholly given up to mere pleasure. Among men he openly professed epicureanism, and gave himself the license of free talk. He had seen no harm in the devotion of his son-in-law, Camusot, to Mademoiselle Coralie, for he himself was secretly the *Mecænas* of Mademoiselle Florentine, the first *danseuse* at the *Gaieté*. But this life and these opinions never appeared in his own home, nor in his external conduct before the world. Uncle Cardot, grave and polite, was thought to be somewhat cold, so much did he affect decorum; a *dévôte* would have called him a hypocrite.

The worthy old gentleman hated priests; he belonged to that great flock of ninnies who subscribed to the "Constitutionnel," and was much concerned about "refusals to bury." He adored Voltaire, though his preferences were really for Piron, Vadé, and Collé. Naturally, he admired Béranger, whom he wittily called the "grandfather of the religion of Lisette." His daughters, Madame Camusot and Madame Protèz, and his two sons would, to use a popular expression, have been flabbergasted if any one had explained to them what their father meant by "singing la Mère Godichon."

This long-headed parent had never mentioned his income to his children, who, seeing that he lived in a cheap way, reflected that he had deprived himself of his property for their sakes, and, therefore, redoubled their attentions and tenderness. In fact, he would sometimes say to his sons:—

"Don't lose your property; remember, I have none to leave you."

Camusot, in whom he recognized a certain likeness to his own nature, and whom he liked enough to make a sharer in his secret pleasures, alone knew of the thirty thousand a year annuity. But Camusot approved of the old man's ethics, and thought that, having made the happiness of his children and nobly fulfilled his duty by them, he now had a right to end his life jovially.

"Don't you see, my friend," said the former master of the Cocon d'Or, "I might re-marry. A young woman would give me more children. Well, Florentine does n't cost me what a wife would; neither does she bore me; and she won't give me children to lessen your property."

Camusot considered that Père Cardot gave expression to a high sense of family duty in these words; he regarded him as an admirable father-in-law.

"He knows," thought he, "how to unite the interests of his children with the pleasures which old age naturally desires after the worries of business life."

Neither the Cardots, nor the Camusots, nor the Protèz knew anything of the ways of life of their aunt Clapart. The family intercourse was restricted to the sending of notes of *faire part* on the occasion of deaths and marriages, and cards at the New Year. The proud Madame Clapart would never have brought herself to seek them were it not for Oscar's interests, and because of her friendship for Moreau, the only person who had been faithful to her in misfortune. She had never annoyed old Cardot by her visits, or her importunities, but she held to him as to a hope, and always went to see him once every three months and talked to him of Oscar, the nephew of the late respectable Madame Cardot; and she took the boy to call upon him three times during each vacation. At each of

these visits the old gentleman had given Oscar a dinner at the Cadran-Bleu, taking him, afterwards, to the Gaieté, and returning him safely to the rue de la Cerisaie. On one occasion, having given the boy an entirely new suit of clothes, he added the silver cup and fork and spoon required for his school outfit.

Oscar's mother endeavored to impress the old gentleman with the idea that his nephew cherished him, and she constantly referred to the cup and the fork and spoon and to the beautiful suit of clothes, though nothing was then left of the latter but the waistcoat. But such little arts did Oscar more harm than good when practised on so sly an old fox as uncle Cardot. The latter had never much liked his departed wife, a tall, spare, red-haired woman; he was also aware of the circumstances of the late Husson's marriage with Oscar's mother, and without in the least condemning her, he knew very well that Oscar was a posthumous child. His nephew, therefore, seemed to him to have no claims on the Cardot family. But Madame Clapart, like all women who concentrate their whole being into the sentiment of motherhood, did not put herself in Cardot's place and see the matter from his point of view; she thought he must certainly be interested in so sweet a child, who bore the maiden name of his late wife.

"Monsieur," said old Cardot's maid-servant, coming

out to him as he walked about the garden while awaiting his breakfast, after his hairdresser had duly shaved him and powdered his queue, "the mother of your nephew, Oscar, is here."

"Good-day, fair lady," said the old man, bowing to Madame Clapart, and wrapping his white piqué dressing-gown about him. "Hey, hey! how this little fellow grows," he added, taking Oscar by the ear.

"He has finished school, and he regretted so much that his dear uncle was not present at the distribution of the Henri IV. prizes, at which he was named. The name of Husson, which, let us hope, he will bear worthily, was proclaimed —"

"The deuce it was!" exclaimed the little old man, stopping short. Madame Clapart, Oscar, and he were walking along a terrace flanked by oranges, myrtles, and pomegranates. "And what did he get?"

"The fourth rank in philosophy," replied the mother, proudly.

"Oh! oh!" cried uncle Cardot, "the rascal has a good deal to do to make up for lost time; for the fourth rank in philosophy, well, *it is n't Peru*, you know! You will stay and breakfast with me?" he added.

"We are at your orders," replied Madame Clapart. "Ah! my dear Monsieur Cardot, what happiness it is for fathers and mothers when their children make a

good start in life! In this respect — indeed, in all others," she added, catching herself up, "you are one of the most fortunate fathers I have ever known. Under your virtuous son-in-law and your amiable daughter, the Cocon d'Or continues to be the greatest establishment of its kind in Paris. And here's your eldest son, for the last ten years at the head of a fine practice and married to wealth. And you have such charming little granddaughters! You are, as it were, the head of four great families. Leave us, Oscar; go and look at the garden, but don't touch the flowers."

"Why, he's eighteen years old!" said uncle Cardot, smiling at this injunction, which made an infant of Oscar.

"Alas, yes, he is eighteen, my good Monsieur Cardot; and after bringing him so far, sound and healthy in mind and body, neither bow-legged nor crooked, after sacrificing everything to give him an education, it would be hard if I could not see him on the road to fortune."

"That Monsieur Moreau who got him the scholarship will be sure to look after his career," said uncle Cardot, concealing his hypocrisy under an air of friendly good-humor.

"Monsieur Moreau may die," she said. "And besides, he has quarrelled irrevocably with the Comte de Sérizy, his patron."

"The deuce he has! Listen, madame; I see you are about to—"

"No, monsieur," said Oscar's mother, interrupting the old man, who, out of courtesy to the "fair lady," repressed his annoyance at being interrupted. "Alas, you do not know the miseries of a mother who, for seven years past, has been forced to take a sum of six hundred francs a year for her son's education from the miserable eighteen hundred francs of her husband's salary. Yes, monsieur, that is all we have had to live upon. Therefore, what more can I do for my poor Oscar? Monsieur Clapart so hates the child that it is impossible for me to keep him in the house. A poor woman, alone in the world, am I not right to come and consult the only relation my Oscar has under heaven?"

"Yes, you are right," said uncle Cardot. "You never told me of all this before."

"Ah, monsieur!" replied Madame Clapart, proudly, "you were the last to whom I would have told my wretchedness. It is all my own fault; I married a man whose incapacity is almost beyond belief. Yes, I am, indeed, most unhappy."

"Listen to me, madame," said the little old man, "and don't weep; it is most painful to me to see a fair lady cry. After all, your son bears the name of Husson, and if my dear deceased wife were living she

would wish to do something for the name of her father and of her brother — ”

“She loved her brother,” said Oscar’s mother.

“But all my fortune is given to my children, who expect nothing from me at my death,” continued the old man. “I have divided among them the millions that I had, because I wanted to see them happy and enjoying their wealth during my lifetime. I have nothing now except an annuity; and at my age one clings to old habits. Do you know the path on which you ought to start this young fellow?” he went on, after calling to Oscar and taking him by the arm. “Let him study law; I’ll pay the costs. Put him in a lawyer’s office and let him learn the business of pettifogging; if he does well, if he distinguishes himself, if he likes his profession and I am still alive, each of my children shall, when the proper time comes, lend him a quarter of the cost of a practice; and I will be security for him. You will only have to feed and clothe him. Of course he’ll sow a few wild oats, but he’ll learn life. Look at me: I left Lyon with two double louis which my grandmother gave me, and walked to Paris; and what am I now? Fasting is good for the health. Discretion, honesty, and work, young man, and you’ll succeed. There’s a great deal of pleasure in earning one’s fortune; and if a man keeps his teeth he eats what he likes in his old age, and

sings, as I do, 'La Mère Godichon.' Remember my words: Honesty, work, discretion."

"Do you hear that, Oscar?" said his mother. "Your uncle sums up in three words all that I have been saying to you. You ought to carve the last word in letters of fire on your memory."

"Oh, I have," said Oscar.

"Very good, — then thank your uncle; did n't you hear him say he would take charge of your future? You will be a lawyer in Paris."

"He does n't see the grandeur of his destiny," said the little old man, observing Oscar's apathetic air. "Well, he's just out of school. Listen, I'm no talker," he continued; "but I have this to say: Remember that at your age honesty and uprightness are maintained only by resisting temptations; of which, in a great city like Paris, there are many at every step. Live in your mother's home, in the garret; go straight to the law-school; from there to your lawyer's office; drudge night and day, and study at home. Become, by the time you are twenty-two, a second clerk; by the time you are twenty-four, head-clerk; be steady and you will win all. If, moreover, you should n't like the profession, you might enter the office of my son the notary, and eventually succeed him. Therefore, work, patience, discretion, honesty, — those are your landmarks."

"God grant that you may live thirty years longer to see your fifth child realizing all we expect from him," cried Madame Clapart, seizing uncle Cardot's hand and pressing it with a gesture that recalled her youth.

"Now come to breakfast," replied the kind old man, leading Oscar by the ear.

During the meal uncle Cardot observed his nephew without appearing to do so, and soon saw that the lad knew nothing of life.

"Send him here to me now and then," he said to Madame Clapart, as he bade her good-bye, "and I'll form him for you."

This visit calmed the anxieties of the poor mother, who had not hoped for such brilliant success. For the next fortnight she took Oscar to walk daily, and watched him tyrannically. This brought matters to the end of October. One morning as the poor household was breakfasting on a salad of herring and lettuce, with milk for a dessert, Oscar beheld with terror the formidable ex-steward, who entered the room and surprised this scene of poverty.

"We are now living in Paris — but not as we lived at Presles," said Moreau, wishing to make known to Madame Clapart the change in their relations caused by Oscar's folly. "I shall seldom be here myself; for I have gone into partnership with Père Léger and Père Margueron of Beaumont. We are speculating in land,

and we have begun by purchasing the estate of Persan. I am the head of the concern, which has a capital of a million; part of which I have borrowed on my own securities. When I find a good thing, Père Léger and I examine it; my partners have each a quarter and I a half in the profits; but I do nearly all the work, and for that reason I shall be constantly on the road. My wife lives here, in the faubourg du Roule, very plainly. When we see how the business turns out, if we risk only the profits, and if Oscar behaves himself, we may, perhaps, employ him."

"Ah! my friend, the catastrophe caused by my poor boy's heedlessness may prove to be the cause of your making a brilliant fortune; for, really and truly, you were burying your energy and your capacity at Presles."

Madame Clapart then went on to relate her visit to uncle Cardot, in order to show Moreau that neither she nor her son need any longer be a burden on him.

"He is right, that old fellow," said the ex-steward. "We must hold Oscar in that path with an iron hand, and he will end as a barrister or a notary. But he mustn't leave the track; he must go straight through with it. Ha! I know how to help you. The legal business of land-agents is quite important, and I have heard of a lawyer who has just bought what is called a *titre nu*; that means a practice without clients. He is

a young man, and he is now too eager for work to remain idle. His name is Jacques. I'll offer him my services on condition that he takes Oscar as a pupil: and I'll ask him to let the boy live with him at nine hundred francs a year, of which I will pay three, so that your son will cost you only six hundred francs without his living in France. If the boy ever means to become a man he can only be under a discipline like that. He'll come out of that office a very different, or better, as he may call it."

"Come, Oscar, thank our kind Monsieur Moreau, and don't stand there like a stone post. All young men who commit follies have not the good fortune to meet with friends who still take an interest in their career, even after they have been injured by them."

"The best way to make your peace with me," said Moreau, pressing Oscar's hand, "is to work now with steady application, and to conduct yourself in future properly."

VIII.

TRICKS AND FARCES OF THE EMBRYO LONG ROBE.

TEN days later, Oscar was taken by Moreau to Maître Desroches, solicitor, recently established in the rue de Béthisy, in a vast apartment at the end of a narrow court-yard, for which he was paying a relatively low price.

Desroches, a young man twenty-six years of age, born of poor parents, and brought up with extreme severity by a stern father, had himself known the condition in which Oscar now was. Accordingly, he felt an interest in him, but the sort of interest which alone he could take, checked by the apparent harshness that characterized him. The aspect of this gaunt young man, with a muddy skin and hair cropped like a clothes-brush, who was curt of speech and possessed a piercing eye and a gloomy vivaciousness, terrified the unhappy Oscar.

"We work here day and night," said the lawyer, from the depths of his armchair, and behind a table on which were papers, piled up like Alps. "Monsieur Moreau, we won't kill him; but he'll have to go at our pace. Monsieur Godeschal!" he called out.

Though the day was Sunday, the head-clerk appeared, pen in hand.

“Monsieur Godeschal, here’s the pupil of whom I spoke to you. Monsieur Moreau takes the liveliest interest in him. He will dine with us and sleep in the small attic next to your chamber. You will allot the exact time it takes to go to the law-school and back, so that he does not lose five minutes on the way. You will see that he learns the Code and is proficient in his classes; that is to say, after he has done his work here, you will give him authors to read. In short, he is to be under your immediate direction, and I shall keep an eye on it. They want to make him what you have made yourself, a capable head-clerk, against the time when he can take such a place himself. Go with Monsieur Godeschal, my young friend; he’ll show you your lodging, and you can settle down in it. Did you notice Godeschal?” continued Desroches, speaking to Moreau. “He is a fellow who, like me, has nothing. His sister Mariette, the famous *danseuse*, is laying up her money to buy him a practice in ten years. My clerks are young blades who have nothing but their ten fingers to rely upon. So we all, my five clerks and I, work as hard as a dozen ordinary fellows. But in ten years I’ll have the finest practice in Paris. In my office, business and clients are a passion, and that’s beginning to make itself felt. I took Godeschal from

Derville, where he was only just made second clerk. He gets a thousand francs a year from me, and food and lodging. But he's worth it; he is indefatigable. I love him, that fellow! He has managed to live, as I did when a clerk, on six hundred francs a year. What I care for above all is honesty, spotless integrity; and when it is practised in such poverty as that, a man's a man. For the slightest fault of that kind a clerk leaves my office."

"The lad is in a good school," thought Moreau.

For two whole years Oscar lived in the rue de Béthisy, a den of pettifogging; for if ever that superannuated expression was applicable to a lawyer's office, it was so in this case. Under this supervision, both petty and able, he was kept to his regular hours and to his work with such rigidity that his life in the midst of Paris was that of a monk.

At five in the morning, in all weathers, Godeschal woke up. He went down with Oscar to the office, where they always found their master up and working. Oscar then did the errands of the office and prepared his lessons for the law-school, — and prepared them elaborately; for Godeschal, and frequently Desroches himself, pointed out to their pupil authors to be looked through and difficulties to overcome. He was not allowed to leave a single section of the Code until he had thoroughly mastered it to the satisfaction of his

and a desire to mine, repressed, though it was, by the strict discipline and continuous toil of his life.

General satisfied with Cesar's progress, relieved, in some degree, his vigilance; and when, in July, 1862, Cesar passed his examinations with a spotless record, the anti-agent gave him the money to dress himself elegantly. Madame Caspar, proud and happy at her son, prepared his outfit splendidly for the coming voyage.

In the month of November, when the north wind rose, Cesar Hassan resigned the command of the second clerk, whose work he now did wisely. He had a salary of eight hundred francs with board and lodging. Consequently, some friends who went frequently to Deshayes for the sake of games about his pay-day, promised Madame Caspar to be in the bottom for a pleasure for Cesar, if he continued to be as well in the future.

In spite of these various appearances, Cesar Hassan was undergoing a great strife in his inner being. At times he thought of giving a life so heavily against his nature and his nature. He felt that galley-slaves were happier than he. Galled by the collar of this iron system, wild desires seized him to fly when he compared himself in the street with the well-dressed young men whom he met. Sometimes he was driven by a sort of madness towards women; then, again, he resigned himself, but only to fall into a deeper disgust for life.

Impelled by the example of Godeschal, he was forced, rather than led of himself, to remain in that rugged way.

Godeschal, who watched and took note of Oscar, made it a matter of principle not to allow his pupil to be exposed to temptation. Generally the young clerk was without money, or had so little that he could not, if he would, give way to excesses. During the last year, the worthy Godeschal had made five or six parties of pleasure with Oscar, defraying the expenses, for he felt that the rope by which he tethered the young kid must be slackened. These "pranks," as he called them, helped Oscar to endure existence, for there was little amusement in breakfasting with his uncle Cardot, and still less in going to see his mother, who lived even more penuriously than Desroches. Moreau could not make himself familiar with Oscar as Godeschal could; and perhaps that sincere friend to young Husson was behind Godeschal in these efforts to initiate the poor youth safely into the mysteries of life. Oscar, grown prudent, had come, through contact with others, to see the extent and the character of the fault he had committed on that luckless journey; but the volume of his repressed fancies and the follies of youth might still get the better of him. Nevertheless, the more knowledge he could get of the world and its laws, the better his mind would form itself, and, provided Gode-

and a desire to shine, repressed, though it was, by the stern discipline and continual toil of his life.

Moreau, satisfied with Oscar's progress, relaxed, in some degree, his watchfulness; and when, in July, 1825, Oscar passed his examinations with a spotless record, the land-agent gave him the money to dress himself elegantly. Madame Clapart, proud and happy in her son, prepared the outfit splendidly for the rising lawyer.

In the month of November, when the courts reopened, Oscar Husson occupied the chamber of the second clerk, whose work he now did wholly. He had a salary of eight hundred francs with board and lodging. Consequently, uncle Cardot, who went privately to Desroches and made inquiries about his nephew, promised Madame Clapart to be on the lookout for a practice for Oscar, if he continued to do as well in the future.

In spite of these virtuous appearances, Oscar Husson was undergoing a great strife in his inmost being. At times he thought of quitting a life so directly against his tastes and his nature. He felt that galley-slaves were happier than he. Galled by the collar of this iron system, wild desires seized him to fly when he compared himself in the street with the well-dressed young men whom he met. Sometimes he was driven by a sort of madness towards women; then, again, he resigned himself, but only to fall into a deeper disgust for life.

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schal never lost sight of him, Moreau flattered himself that between them they could bring the son of Madame Clapart through in safety.

"How is he getting on?" asked the land-agent of Godeschal on his return from one of his journeys which had kept him some months out of Paris.

"Always too much vanity," replied Godeschal. "You give him fine clothes and fine linen, he wears the shirt-fronts of a stockbroker, and so my dainty coxcomb spends his Sundays in the Tuileries, looking out for adventures. What else can you expect? That's youth. He torments me to present him to my sister, where he would see a pretty sort of society!—actresses, ballet-dancers, elegant young fops, spend-thrifts who are wasting their fortunes! His mind, I'm afraid, is not fitted for law. He can talk well, though; and if we could make him a barrister he might plead cases that were carefully prepared for him."

In the month of November, 1825, soon after Oscar Husson had taken possession of his new clerkship, and at the moment when he was about to pass his examination for the licentiate's degree, a new clerk arrived to take the place made vacant by Oscar's promotion.

This fourth clerk, named Frédéric Marest, intended to enter the magistracy, and was now in his third year at the law school. He was a fine young man of twenty-

three, enriched to the amount of some twelve thousand francs a year by the death of a bachelor uncle, and the son of Madame Marest, widow of a wealthy wood-merchant. This future magistrate, actuated by a laudable desire to understand his vocation in its smallest details, had put himself in Desroches' office for the purpose of studying legal procedure, and of training himself to take a place as head-clerk in two years. He hoped to do his *stage* (the period between the admission as licentiate and the call to the bar) in Paris, in order to be fully prepared for the functions of a post which would surely not be refused to a rich young man. To see himself, by the time he was thirty, *procureur du roi* in any court, no matter where, was his sole ambition. Though Frédéric Marest was cousin-german to Georges Marest, the latter not having told his surname in Pierrotin's *coucou*, Oscar Husson did not connect the present Marest with the grandson of Czerni-Georges.

"Messieurs," said Godeschal at breakfast time, addressing all the clerks, "I announce to you the arrival of a new jurisconsult; and as he is rich, richissime, we will make him, I hope, pay a glorious entrance-fee."

"Forward, the book!" cried Oscar, nodding to the youngest clerk, "and pray let us be serious."

The youngest clerk climbed like a squirrel along the

shelves which lined the room, until he could reach a register placed on the top shelf, where a thick layer of dust had settled on it.

"It is getting colored," said the little clerk, exhibiting the volume.

We must explain the perennial joke of this book, then much in vogue in legal offices. In a clerical life where work is the rule, amusement is all the more treasured because it is rare; but, above all, a hoax or a practical joke is enjoyed with delight. This fancy or custom does, to a certain extent, explain George Marest's behavior in the *coucou*. The gravest and most gloomy clerk is possessed, at times, with a craving for fun and quizzing. The instinct with which a set of young clerks will seize and develop a hoax or a practical joke is really marvellous. It has no counterpart except among painters. The denizens of a studio and of a lawyer's office are, in this line, superior to comedians.

In buying a practice without clients, Desroches began, as it were, a new dynasty. This circumstance made a break in the usages relative to the reception of new-comers. Moreover, Desroches having taken an office where legal documents had never yet been scribbled, had bought new tables, and white boxes edged with blue, also new. His staff was made up of clerks coming from other offices, without mutual ties, and sur-

prised, as one may say, to find themselves together. Godeschal, who had served his apprenticeship under Maitre Derville, was not the sort of clerk to allow the precious tradition of the "welcome" to be lost. This "welcome" is a breakfast which every neophyte must give to the "ancients" of the office into which he enters.

Now, about the time when Oscar came to the office, during the first six months of Desroches' installation, on a winter evening when the work had been got through more quickly than usual, and the clerks were warming themselves before the fire preparatory to departure, it came into Godeschal's head to construct and compose a Register *architriclino-basochien*, of the utmost antiquity, saved from the fires of the Revolution, and derived through the *procureur* of the Châtelet-Bordin, the immediate predecessor of Sauvagnest, the attorney, from whom Desroches had bought his practice. The work, which was highly approved by the other clerks, was begun by a search through all the dealers in old paper for a register, made of paper with the mark of the eighteenth century, duly bound in parchment, on which should be the stamp of an order in council. Having found such a volume it was left about in the dust, on the stove, on the ground, in the kitchen, and even in what the clerks called the "chamber of deliberations;" and thus it obtained a mouldi-

ness to delight an antiquary, cracks of aged dilapidation, and broken corners that looked as though the rats had gnawed them; also, the gilt edges were tarnished with surprising perfection. As soon as the book was duly prepared, the entries were made. The following extracts will show to the most obtuse mind the purpose to which the office of Maître Desroches devoted this register, the first sixty pages of which were filled with reports of fictitious cases. On the first page appeared as follows, in the legal spelling of the eighteenth century:—

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so be it. This day, the feast of the our lady Sainte-Genevieve, patron saint of Paris, under whose protection have existed, since the year 1525 the clerks of this Practice, we the undersigned, clerks and sub-clerks of Maistre Jerosme-Sébastien Bordin, successor to the late Guerbet, in his lifetime *procureur* at the Chastelet, do hereby recognize the obligation under which we lie to renew and continue the register and the archives of installation of the clerks of this noble Practice, a glorious member of the Kingdom of Basoche, the which register, being now full in consequence of the many acts and deeds of our well-beloved predecessors, we have consigned to the Keeper of the Archives of the Palais for safe-keeping, with the registers of other ancient Practices; and we have ourselves gone, each and all, to hear mass at the parish church of Saint-Severin to solemnize the inauguration of this our new register.

In witness whereof we have hereunto signed our names: MALIN, head-clerk; GRÉVIN, second-clerk; ATHANASE

FERET, clerk; JACQUES HUET, clerk; REGNAULT DE SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, clerk; BEDEAU, youngest clerk and gutter-jumper.

In the year of our Lord 1787.

After the mass aforesaid was heard, we conveyed ourselves to Courtille, where, at the common charge, we ordered a fine breakfast; which did not end till seven o'clock the next morning.

This was marvellously well engrossed. An expert would have said that it was written in the eighteenth century. Twenty-seven reports of receptions of neophytes followed, the last in the fatal year of 1792. Then came a blank of fourteen years; after which the register began again, in 1806, with the appointment of Bordin as attorney before the first Court of the Seine. And here follows the deed which proclaimed the reconstitution of the kingdom of Basoche: —

God in his mercy willed that, in spite of the fearful storms which have cruelly ravaged the land of France, now become a great Empire, the archives of the very celebrated Practice of Maitre Bordin should be preserved; and we, the undersigned, clerks of the very virtuous and very worthy Maitre Bordin, do not hesitate to attribute this unheard-of preservation, when all titles, privileges, and charters were lost, to the protection of Sainte-Geneviève, patron Saint of this office, and also to the reverence which the last of the *procureurs* of noble race had for all that belonged to ancient usages and customs. In the uncertainty of knowing the exact part of Sainte-Geneviève and Maitre Bordin

in this miracle, we have resolved, each of us, to go to Saint-Étienne du Mont and there hear mass, which will be said before the altar of that Holy-Shepherdess who sends us sheep to shear, and also to offer a breakfast to our master Bordin, hoping that he will pay the costs.

Signed: OIGNARD, first clerk; POIDEVIN, second clerk; PROUST, clerk; DERVILLE, clerk; AUGUSTIN CORET, sub-clerk.

At the office.

November, 1806.

At three in the afternoon, the above-named clerks hereby return their grateful thanks to their excellent master, who regaled them at the establishment of the Sieur Rolland, restaurateur, rue du Hasard, with exquisite wines of three regions, to wit: Bordeaux, Champagne, and Burgundy, also with dishes most carefully chosen, between the hours of four in the afternoon to half-past seven in the evening. Coffee, ices, and liqueurs were in abundance. But the presence of the master himself forbade the chanting of hymns of praise in clerical stanzas. No clerk exceeded the bounds of amiable gayety, for the worthy, respectable, and generous patron had promised to take his clerks to see Talma in "Britannicus," at the Théâtre-Français. Long life to Maître Bordin! May God shed favors on his venerable pow! May he sell dear so glorious a practice! May the rich clients for whom he prays arrive! May his bills of costs and charges be paid in a trice! May our masters to come be like him! May he ever be loved by clerks in other worlds than this!

Here followed thirty-three reports of various receptions of new clerks, distinguished from one another by

different writing and different inks, also by quotations, signatures, and praises of good cheer and wines, which seemed to show that each report was written and signed on the spot, *inter pocula*.

Finally, under date of the month of June, 1822, the period when Desroches took the oath, appears this constitutional declaration : —

I, the undersigned, François-Claude-Marie Godeschal, called by Maitre Desroches to perform the difficult functions of head-clerk in a Practice where the clients have to be created, having learned through Maitre Derville, from whose office I come, of the existence of the famous archives *architriclino-basochien*, so celebrated at the Palais, have implored our gracious master to obtain them from his predecessor ; for it has become of the highest importance to recover a document bearing date of the year 1786, which is connected with other documents deposited for safe-keeping at the Palais, the existence of which has been certified to by Messrs. Terrasse and Duclos, keepers of records, by the help of which we may go back to the year 1525, and find historical indications of the utmost value on the manners, customs, and cookery of the clerical race.

Having received a favorable answer to this request, the present office has this day been put in possession of these proofs of the worship in which our predecessors held the Goddess Bottle and good living.

In consequence thereof, for the edification of our successors, and to renew the chain of years and goblets, I, the said Godeschal, have invited Messieurs Doublet, second clerk ; Vassal, third clerk ; Hérisson and Grandemain, clerks ;

and Dumets, sub-clerk, to breakfast, Sunday next, at the "Cheval Rouge," on the Quai Saint-Bernard, where we will celebrate the victory of obtaining this volume which contains the Charter of our gullets.

This day, Sunday, June 27th, were imbibed twelve bottles of twelve different wines, regarded as exquisite; also were devoured melons, *pâtés au jus romanum*, and a fillet of beef with mushroom sauce. Mademoiselle Mariette, the illustrious sister of our head-clerk and leading lady of the Royal Academy of music and dancing, having obligingly put at the disposition of this Practice orchestra seats for the performance of this evening, it is proper to make this record of her generosity. Moreover, it is hereby decreed that the aforesaid clerks shall convey themselves in a body to that noble demoiselle to thank her in person and declare to her that on the occasion of her first lawsuit, if the devil sends her one, she shall pay the money laid out upon it, and no more.

And our head-clerk Godeschal has been and is hereby proclaimed a flower of Basoche, and, more especially, a good fellow. May a man who treats so well be soon in treaty for a Practice of his own!

On this record were stains of wine, *pâtés*, and candle-grease. To exhibit the stamp of truth that the writers had managed to put upon these records, we may here give the report of Oscar's own pretended reception:—

This day, Monday, November 25th, 1822, after a session held yesterday in the rue de la Cerisaie, Arsenal quarter, at the house of Madame Clapart, mother of the candidate-basochien Oscar Husson, we, the undersigned, declare that

the repast of admission surpassed our expectations. It was composed of radishes, pink and black, gherkins, anchovies, butter and olives for hors-d'œuvre; a succulent soup of rice, bearing testimony to maternal solicitude, for we recognized therein a delicious taste of poultry; indeed, by acknowledgment of the new member, we learned that the giblets of a fine stew prepared by the hands of Madame Clapart herself had been judiciously inserted into the family soup-pot with a care that is never taken except in such households.

Item: the said giblets inclosed in a sea of jelly.

Item: a tongue of beef with tomatoes, which rendered us all tongue-tied automatoes.

Item: a compote of pigeons which caused us to think the angels had had a finger in it.

Item: a timbale of macaroni surrounded by chocolate custards.

Item: a dessert composed of eleven delicate dishes, among which we remarked (in spite of the tipsiness caused by sixteen bottles of the choicest wines) a compote of peaches of august and mirobolant delicacy.

The wines of Roussillon and those of the banks of the Rhone completely effaced those of Champagne and Burgundy. A bottle of maraschino and another of kirsch did, in spite of the exquisite coffee, plunge us into so marked an œnological ecstasy that we found ourselves at a late hour in the Bois de Boulogne instead of our domiciles, where we thought we were.

In the statutes of our Order there is one rule which is rigidly enforced; namely, to allow all candidates for the privileges of Basoche to limit the magnificence of their feast of welcome to the length of their purse; for it is publicly notorious that no one delivers himself up to The-

mis if he has a fortune, and every clerk is, alas, sternly curtailed by his parents. Consequently, we hereby record with the highest praise the liberal conduct of Madame Clapart, widow, by her first marriage, of Monsieur Husson, father of the candidate, who is worthy of the hurrahs which we gave for her at dessert.

To all of which we hereby set our hands.

[Signed by all the clerks.]

Three clerks had already been deceived by the Book, and three real "receptions of welcome," were recorded on this imposing register.

The day after the arrival of each neophyte, the little sub-clerk (the errand-boy and "gutter-jumper") laid upon the new-comer's desk the "Archives Architriclino Basochiennes," and the clerks enjoyed the sight of his countenance as he studied its facetious pages. *Inter pocula* each candidate had learned the secret of the farce, and the revelation inspired him with the desire to hoax his successor.

We now see why Oscar, become in his turn participator in the hoax, called out to the little clerk, "Forward, the book!"

Ten minutes later a handsome young man, with a fine figure and pleasant face, presented himself, asked for Monsieur Desroches, and gave his name without hesitation to Godeschal.

"I am Frédéric Marest," he said, "and I come to take the place of third clerk."

"Monsieur Husson," said Godeschal to Oscar, "show monsieur his seat and tell him about the customs of the office."

The next day the new clerk found the register lying on his desk. He took it up, but after reading a few pages he began to laugh, said nothing to the assembled clerks, and laid the book down again.

"Messieurs," he said, when the hour of departure came at five o'clock, "I have a cousin who is head-clerk of the notary Maître Léopold Hannequin; I will ask his advice as to what I ought to do for my welcome."

"That looks ill," cried Godeschal, when Frédéric had gone, "he has n't the cut of a novice, that fellow!"

"We'll get some fun out of him yet," said Oscar.

IX.

LA MARQUISE DE LAS FLORENTINAS Y CABIBOLOS.

THE following day, at two o'clock, a young man entered the office, whom Oscar recognized as Georges Marest, now head-clerk of the notary Hannequin.

"Ha! here's the friend of Ali pacha!" he exclaimed in a flippant way.

"Hey! you here, Monsieur l'ambassadeur!" returned Georges, recollecting Oscar.

"So you know each other?" said Godeschal, addressing Georges.

"I should think so! We got into a scrape together," replied Georges, "about two years ago. Yes, I had to leave Crottat and go to Hannequin in consequence of that affair."

"What was it?" asked Godeschal.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Georges, at a sign from Oscar. "We tried to hoax a peer of France, and he bowled us over. *Ah ça!* so you want to jockey my cousin, do you?"

"We jockey no one," replied Oscar, with dignity; "there's our charter."

And he presented the famous register, pointing to a place where sentence of banishment was passed on a refractory who was stated to have been forced, for acts of dishonesty, to leave the office in 1788.

Georges laughed as he looked through the archives.

"Well, well," he said, "my cousin and I are rich, and we'll give you a fête such as you never had before, —something to stimulate your imaginations for that register. To-morrow (Sunday) you are bidden to the Rocher de Cancale at two o'clock. Afterwards, I'll take you to spend the evening with Madame la Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirollos, where we shall play cards, and you'll see the élite of the women of fashion. Therefore, gentlemen of the lower courts," he added, with notarial assumption, "you will have to behave yourselves, and carry your wine like the seigneurs of the Regency."

"Hurrah!" cried the office like one man. "Bravo! very well! *vivat!* Long live the Marests!"

"What's all this about?" asked Desroches, coming out from his private office. "Ah! is that you, Georges? I know what you are after; you want to demoralize my clerks."

So saying, he withdrew to his own room, calling Oscar after him.

"Here," he said, opening his cash-box, "are five hundred francs. Go to the Palais, and get from the

registrar a copy of the decision in Vandernessee against Vandernessee; it must be served to-night if possible. I have promised a *prod* of twenty francs to Simon. Wait for the copy if it is not ready. Above all, don't let yourself be fooled; for Derville is capable, in the interest of his clients, to stick a spoke in our wheel. Count Félix de Vandernessee is more powerful than his brother, our client, the ambassador. Therefore keep your eyes open, and if there's the slightest hitch come back to me at once."

Oscar departed with the full intention of distinguishing himself in this little skirmish, — the first affair entrusted to him since his installation as second clerk.

After the departure of Georges and Oscar, Godeschal sounded the new clerk to discover the joke which, as he thought, lay behind this Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirollos. But Frédéric, with the coolness and gravity of a king's attorney, continued his cousin's hoax, and by his way of answering, and his manner generally, he succeeded in making the office believe that the marquise might really be the widow of a Spanish grandee, to whom his cousin Georges was paying his addresses. Born in Mexico, and the daughter of Creole parents, this young and wealthy widow was noted for the easy manners and habits of the women of those climates.

" "She loves to laugh, she loves to sing, she loves

to drink like me!’” he said in a low voice, quoting the well-known song of Béranger. “Georges,” he added, “is very rich; he has inherited from his father (who was a widower) eighteen thousand francs a year, and with the twelve thousand which an uncle has just left to each of us, he has an income of thirty thousand. So he pays his debts, and gives up the law. He hopes to be Marquis de las Florentinas, for the young widow is marquise in her own right, and has the privilege of giving her titles to her husband.”

Though the clerks were still a good deal undecided in mind as to the marquise, the double perspective of a breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale and a fashionable festivity put them into a state of joyous expectation. They reserved all points as to the Spanish lady, intending to judge her without appeal after the meeting.

The Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirollos was neither more nor less than Mademoiselle Agathe-Florentine Cabirolle, first *danseuse* at the Gaieté, with whom uncle Cardot was in the habit of singing “*Mère Godichon*.” A year after the very reparable loss of Madame Cardot, the successful merchant encountered Florentine as she was leaving Coulon’s dancing-class. Attracted by the beauty of that choregraphic flower (Florentine was then about thirteen years of age), he followed her to the rue Pastourel, where he found that the future star of the ballet was the daughter of a por-

tress. Two weeks later, the mother and daughter, established in the rue de Crussol, were enjoying a modest competence. It was to this protector of the arts — to use the consecrated phrase — that the theatre owed the brilliant *danseuse*. The generous Mæcenas made two beings almost beside themselves with joy in the possession of mahogany furniture, hangings, carpets, and a regular kitchen; he allowed them a woman-of-all-work, and gave them two hundred and fifty francs a month for their living. Père Cardot, with his hair in “pigeon-wings,” seemed like an angel, and was treated with the attention due to a benefactor. To him this was the age of gold.

For three years the warbler of “Mère Godichon” had the wise policy to keep Mademoiselle Cabirolle and her mother in this little apartment, which was only ten steps from the theatre; but he gave the girl, out of love for the choregraphic art, the great Vestris for a master. In 1820 he had the pleasure of seeing Florentine dance her first “pas” in the ballet of a melodrama entitled “The Ruins of Babylon.” Florentine was then about sixteen. Shortly after this *début* Père Cardot became an “old screw” in the eyes of his *protégée*; but as he had the sense to see that a *danseuse* at the Gaieté had a certain rank to maintain, he raised the monthly stipend to five hundred francs, for which, although he did not again become an angel, he was, at least, a

"friend for life," a second father. This was his silver age.

From 1820 to 1823, Florentine had the experience of every *danseuse* of nineteen to twenty years of age. Her friends were the illustrious Mariette and Tullia, leading ladies of the Opera, Florine, and also poor Coralie, torn too early from the arts, and love, and Camusot. As old Cardot had by this time acquired five additional years, he had fallen into the indulgence of a semi-paternity, which is the way with old men towards the young talents they have trained, and which owe their successes to them. Besides, where could he have found another Florentine who knew all his habits and likings, and with whom he and his friends could sing "*Mère Godichon*"? So the little old man remained under a yoke that was semi-conjugal and also irresistibly strong. This was the brass age for the old fellow.

During the five years of silver and gold Père Cardot had laid by eighty thousand francs. The old gentleman, wise from experience, foresaw that by the time he was seventy Florentine would be of age, probably engaged at the Opera, and, consequently, wanting all the luxury of a theatrical star. Some days before the party mentioned by Georges, Père Cardot had spent the sum of forty-five thousand francs in fitting up for his Florentine the former apartment of the late Coralie.

In Paris there are suites of rooms as well as houses and streets which have their predestinations. Enriched with a magnificent service of plate, the *prima danseuse* of the Gaieté began to give dinners, spent three hundred francs a month on her dress, never went out except in a hired carriage, and had a maid for herself, a cook, and a little footman.

In fact, an engagement at the Opera was already in the wind. The Cocon d'Or did homage to its first master by sending its most splendid products for the gratification of Mademoiselle Cabirolle, now called Florentine. The magnificence which suddenly burst upon her apartment in the rue de Vendôme would have satisfied the most ambitious supernumerary. After being the master of the ship for seven years, Cardot now found himself towed along by a force of unlimited caprice. But the luckless old gentleman was fond of his tyrant. Florentine was to close his eyes; he meant to leave her a hundred thousand francs. The iron age had now begun.

Georges Marest, with thirty thousand francs a year, and a handsome face, courted Florentine. Every *danseuse* makes a point of having some young man who will take her to drive, and arrange the gay excursions into the country which all such women delight in. However disinterested she may be, the courtship of such a star is a passion which costs some trifles

to the favored mortal. There are dinners at restaurants, boxes at the theatres, carriages to go to the environs and return, choice wines consumed in profusion, — for an opera *danseuse* eats and drinks like an athlete. Georges amused himself like other young men who pass at a jump from paternal discipline to a rich independence, and the death of his uncle, nearly doubling his means, had still further enlarged his ideas. As long as he had only his patrimony of eighteen thousand francs a year, his intention was to become a notary, but (as his cousin remarked to the clerks of Desroches) a man must be stupid who begins a profession with the fortune most men hope to acquire in order to leave it. Wiser than Georges, Frédéric persisted in following the career of public office, and of putting himself, as we have seen, in training for it.

A young man as handsome and attractive as Georges might very well aspire to the hand of a rich creole; and the clerks in Desroches' office, all of them the sons of poor parents, having never frequented the great world, or, indeed, known anything about it, put themselves into their best clothes on the following day, impatient enough to behold, and be presented to the Mexican Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolas.

"What luck," said Oscar to Godeschal, as they were getting up in the morning, "that I had just ordered a new coat and trousers and waistcoat, and that my dear

mother had made me that fine outfit! I have six frilled shirts of fine linen in the dozen she made for me. We shall make an appearance! Ha! ha! suppose one of us were to carry off the Creole marchioness from that Georges Marest!"

"Fine occupation that, for a clerk in our office!" cried Godeschal. "Will you never control your vanity, popinjay?"

"Ah! monsieur," said Madame Clapart, who entered the room at that moment to bring her son some cravats, and overheard the last words of the head-clerk. "would to God that my Oscar might always follow your advice. It is what I tell him all the time: 'Imitate Monsieur Godeschal; listen to what he tells you.'"

"He'll go all right, madame," interposed Godeschal; "but he mustn't commit any more blunders like one he was guilty of last night, or he'll lose the confidence of the master. Monsieur Derosches won't stand any one not succeeding in what he tells them to do. He ordered your son, for a first employment in his new clerkship, to get a copy of a judgment which ought to have been served last evening, and Oscar, instead of doing so, allowed himself to be fooled. The master was furious. It's a chance if I have been able to repair the mischief by going this morning, at six o'clock, to see the head-clerk at the Palais, who has promised me to have the copy ready by seven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Ah, Godeschal!" cried Oscar, going up to him and pressing his hand. "You are, indeed, a true friend."

"Ah, monsieur!" said Madame Clapart, "a mother is happy, indeed, in knowing that her son has a friend like you; you may rely upon a gratitude which can end only with my life. Oscar, one thing I want to say to you now. Distrust that Georges Marest. I wish you had never met him again, for he was the cause of your first great misfortune in life."

"Was he? How so?" asked Godeschal.

The too devoted mother explained succinctly the adventure of her poor Oscar in Pierrotin's *coucou*.

"I am certain," said Godeschal, "that that *blagueur* is preparing some trick against us for this evening. As for me, I can't go to the Marquise de las Florintinas' party, for my sister wants me to draw up the terms of her new engagement; I shall have to leave after the dessert. But, Oscar, be on your guard. They will ask you to play, and, of course, the Desroches office mustn't draw back; but be careful. You shall play for both of us; here's a hundred francs," said the good fellow, knowing that Oscar's purse was dry from the demands of his tailor and bootmaker. "Be prudent; remember not to play beyond that sum; and don't let yourself get tipsy, either with play or libations. *Saperlotte!* a second clerk is already a man of weight, and should n't gamble on notes, or go

beyond a certain limit in anything. His business is to get himself admitted to the bar. Therefore don't drink too much, don't play too long, and maintain a proper dignity, — that's your rule of conduct. Above all, get home by midnight; for, remember, you must be at the Palais to-morrow morning by seven to get that judgment. A man is not forbidden to amuse himself, but business first, my boy."

"Do you hear that, Oscar?" said Madame Clapart. "Monsieur Godeschal is indulgent; see how well he knows how to combine the pleasures of youth and the duties of his calling."

Madame Clapart, on the arrival of the tailor and the bootmaker with Oscar's new clothes, remained alone with Godeschal, in order to return him the hundred francs he had just given her son.

"Ah, monsieur!" she said, "the blessings of a mother will follow you wherever you go, and in all your enterprises."

Poor woman! she now had the supreme delight of seeing her son well-dressed, and she gave him a gold watch, the price of which she had saved by economy, as the reward of his good conduct.

"You draw for the conscription next week," she said, "and to prepare, in case you get a bad number, I have been to see your uncle Cardot. He is very much pleased with you; and so delighted to know you are a

second clerk at twenty, and to hear of your successful examination at the law-school, that he promised me the money for a substitute. Are not you glad to think that your own good conduct has brought such reward? Though you have some privations to bear, remember the happiness of being able, five years from now, to buy a practice. And think, too, my dear little kitten, how happy you make your mother."

Oscar's face, somewhat thinned by study, had acquired, through habits of business, a serious expression. He had reached his full growth, his beard was thriving; adolescence had given place to virility. The mother could not refrain from admiring her son and kissing him, as she said:—

"Amuse yourself, my dear boy, but remember the advice of our good Monsieur Godeschal. Ah! by the bye, I was nearly forgetting! Here's a present our friend Moreau sends you. See! what a pretty pocket-book."

"And I want it, too; for the master gave me five hundred francs to get that cursed judgment of Vandernesse *versus* Vandernesse, and I don't want to leave that sum of money in my room."

"But, surely, you are not going to carry it with you!" exclaimed his mother, in alarm. "Suppose you should lose a sum like that! Had n't you better give it to Monsieur Godeschal for safe keeping?"

"Godeschal!" cried Oscar, who thought his mother's suggestion excellent.

But Godeschal, who, like all clerks, had his time to himself on Sundays, from ten to two o'clock, had already departed.

When his mother left him, Oscar went to lounge upon the boulevards until it was time to go to Georges Marest's breakfast. Why not display those beautiful clothes which he wore with a pride and joy which all young fellows who have been pinched for means in their youth will remember. A pretty waistcoat with a blue ground and a palm-leaf pattern, a pair of black cassimere trousers pleated, a black coat very well fitting, and a cane with a gilt top, the cost of which he had saved himself, caused a natural joy to the poor lad, who thought of his manner of dress on the day of that journey to Presles, as the effect that Georges had then produced upon him came back to his mind.

Oscar had before him the perspective of a day of happiness; he was to see the gay world at last! Let us admit that a clerk deprived of enjoyments, though longing for dissipation, was likely to let his unchained senses drive the wise counsels of his mother and Godeschal completely out of his mind. To the shame of youth be it said that good advice is never lacking to it. In the matter of Georges, Oscar himself had a feeling of aversion for him; he felt humiliated before

a witness of that scene in the salon at Presles when Moreau had flung him at the count's feet. The moral senses have their laws, which are implacable, and we are always punished for disregarding them. There is one in particular, which the animals themselves obey without discussion, and invariably; it is that which tells us to avoid those who have once injured us, with or without intention, voluntarily or involuntarily. The creature from whom we receive either damage or annoyance will always be displeasing to us. Whatever may be his rank or the degree of affection in which he stands to us, it is best to break away from him; for our evil genius has sent him to us. Though the Christian sentiment is opposed to it, obedience to this terrible law is essentially social and conservative. The daughter of James II., who seated herself upon her father's throne, must have caused him many a wound before that usurpation. Judas had certainly given some murderous blow to Jesus before he betrayed him. We have within us an inward power of sight, an eye of the soul which foresees catastrophes; and the repugnance that comes over us against the fateful being is the result of that foresight. Though religion orders us to conquer it, distrust remains, and its voice is forever heard. Would Oscar, at twenty years of age, have the wisdom to listen to it?

Alas! when, at half-past two o'clock, Oscar entered

the salon of the Rocher de Cancale, — where were three invited persons beside the clerks, to wit: an old captain of dragoons, named Giroudeau; Finot, a journalist who might procure an engagement for Florentine at the Opera, and du Bruel, an author, the friend of Tullia, one of Mariette's rivals, — the second clerk felt his secret hostility vanish at the first handshaking, the first dashes of conversation as they sat around a table luxuriously served. Georges, moreover, made himself charming to Oscar.

"You've taken to private diplomacy," he said; "for what difference is there between a lawyer and an ambassador? only that between a nation and an individual. Ambassadors are the attorneys of Peoples. If I can ever be useful to you, let me know."

"Well," said Oscar, "I'll admit to you now that you once did me a very great harm."

"Pooh!" said Georges, after listening to the explanations for which he asked; "it was Monsieur de Sérizy who behaved badly. His wife! I would n't have her at any price; neither would I like to be in the count's red skin, minister of State and peer of France as he is. He has a small mind, and I don't care a fig for him now."

Oscar listened with true pleasure to these slurs on the count, for they diminished, in a way, the importance of his fault; and he echoed the spiteful language of the

ex-notary, who amused himself by predicting the blows to the nobility of which the *bourgeoisie* were already dreaming, — blows which were destined to become a reality in 1830.

At half-past three the solid eating of the feast began; the dessert did not appear till eight o'clock, — each course having taken two hours to serve. None but clerks can eat like that! The stomachs of eighteen and twenty are inexplicable to the medical art. The wines were worthy of Borrel, who in those days had superseded the illustrious Balaine, the creator of the first restaurant for delicate and perfectly prepared food in Paris, — that is to say, the whole world.

The report of this Belshazzar's feast for the *architriclino-basochien* register was duly drawn up, beginning, *Inter pocula aurea restauranti, qui vulgo dicitur Rupes Cancali*. Every one can imagine the fine page now added to the Golden Book of jurisprudential festivals.

Godeschal disappeared after signing the report, leaving the eleven guests, stimulated by the old captain of the Imperial Guard, to the wines, toasts, and liqueurs of a dessert composed of choice and early fruits, in pyramids that rivalled the obelisk of Thebes. By half-past ten the little sub-clerk was in such a state that Georges packed him into a coach, paid his fare, and gave the address of his mother to the driver. The

remaining ten, all as drunk as Pitt and Dundas, talked of going on foot along the boulevards, considering the fine evening, to the house of the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolas, where, about midnight, they might expect to find the most brilliant society of Paris. They felt the need of breathing the pure air into their lungs; but, with the exception of Georges, Giroudeau, du Bruel, and Finot, all four accustomed to Parisian orgies, not one of the party could walk. Consequently, Georges sent to a livery-stable for three open carriages, in which he drove his company for an hour round the exterior boulevards from Montmartre to the Barrière du Trône. They returned by Bercy, the quays, and the boulevards to the rue de Vendôme.

The clerks were fluttering still in the skies of fancy to which youth is lifted by intoxication, when their amphitryon introduced them into Florentine's salon. There sparkled a bevy of stage princesses, who, having been informed, no doubt, of Frédéric's joke, were amusing themselves by imitating the women of good society. They were then engaged in eating ices. The wax-candles flamed in the candelabra. Tullia's footmen and those of Madame du Val-Noble and Florine, all in full livery, were serving the dainties on silver salvers. The hangings, a marvel of Lyonnaise workmanship, fastened by gold cords, dazzled all eyes. The flowers of the carpet were like a garden. The

richest *bibelots* and curiosities danced before the eyes of the new-comers.

At first, and in the state to which Georges had brought them, the clerks, and more particularly Oscar, believed in the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabi-rollos. Gold glittered on four card-tables in the bed-chamber. In the salon, the women were playing at vingt-et-un, kept by Nathan, the celebrated author.

After wandering, tipsy and half asleep, through the dark exterior boulevards, the clerks now felt that they had wakened in the palace of Armida. Oscar, presented to the marquise by Georges, was quite stupefied, and did not recognize the *danseuse* he had seen at the Gaieté, in this lady, aristocratically décolletée and swathed in laces, till she looked like the vignette of a keepsake, who received him with manners and graces the like of which was neither in the memory nor the imagination of a young clerk rigidly brought up. After admiring the splendors of the apartment and the beautiful women there displayed, who had all outdone each other in their dress for this occasion, Oscar was taken by the hand and led by Florentine to a vingt-et-un table.

"Let me present you," she said, "to the beautiful Marquise d'Anglade, one of my nearest friends."

And she took poor Oscar to the pretty Fanny Beaupré, who had just made herself a reputation at the

Porte-Saint-Martin, in a melodrama entitled "La Famille d'Anglade."

"My dear," said Florentine, "allow me to present to you a charming youth, whom you can take as a partner in the game."

"Ah! that will be delightful," replied the actress, smiling, as she looked at Oscar. "I am losing. Shall we go shares, monsieur?"

"Madame la marquise, I am at your orders," said Oscar, sitting down beside her.

"Put down the money; I'll play; you shall bring me luck! See, here are my last hundred francs."

And the "marquise" took out from her purse, the rings of which were adorned with diamonds, five gold pieces. Oscar pulled out his hundred in silver five-franc pieces, much ashamed at having to mingle such ignoble coins with gold. In ten throws the actress lost the two hundred francs.

"Oh! how stupid!" she cried. "I'm banker now. But we'll play together still, won't we?"

Fanny Beaupré rose to take her place as banker, and Oscar, finding himself observed by the whole table, dared not retire on the ground that he had no money. Speech failed him, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"Lend me five hundred francs," said the actress to the *danseuse*.

Florentine brought the money, which she obtained from Georges, who had just passed eight times at *écarté*.

"Nathan has won twelve hundred francs," said the actress to Oscar. "Bankers always win; we won't let them fool us, will we?" she whispered in his ear.

Persons of nerve, imagination, and dash will understand how it was that poor Oscar opened his pocket-book and took out the note of five hundred francs which Desroches had given him. He looked at Nathan, the distinguished author, who now began, with Florine, to play a heavy game against the bank.

"Come, my little man, take 'em up," cried Fanny Beaupré, signing to Oscar to rake in the two hundred francs which Nathan and Florine had punted.

The actress did not spare taunts or jests on those who lost. She enlivened the game with jokes which Oscar thought singular; but reflection was stifled by joy; for the first two throws produced a gain of two thousand francs. Oscar then thought of feigning illness and making his escape, leaving his partner behind him; but "honor" kept him there. Three more turns and the gains were lost. Oscar felt a cold sweat running down his back, and he was sobered completely.

The two next throws carried off the thousand francs of their mutual stake. Oscar was consumed with thirst, and drank three glasses of iced punch one after

the other. The actress now led him into the bed-chamber, where the rest of the company were playing, talking frivolities with an easy air. But by this time the sense of his wrong-doing overcame him; the figure of Desroches appeared to him like a vision. He turned aside to a dark corner and sat down, putting his handkerchief to his eyes, and wept. Florentine noticed the attitude of true grief, which, because it is sincere, is certain to strike the eye of one who acts. She ran to him, took the handkerchief from his hand, and saw his tears; then she led him into a boudoir alone.

"What is it, my child?" she said.

At the tone and accent of that voice Oscar recognized a motherly kindness which is often found in women of her kind, and he answered openly:—

"I have lost five hundred francs which my employer gave me to obtain a document to-morrow morning; there's nothing for me but to fling myself into the river; I am dishonored."

"How silly you are!" she said. "Stay where you are; I'll get you a thousand francs and you can win back what you've lost; but don't risk more than five hundred, so that you may be sure of your master's money. Georges plays a fine game at *écarté*; bet on him."

Oscar, frightened by his position, accepted the offer of the mistress of the house.

"Ah!" he thought, "it is only women of rank who are capable of such kindness. Beautiful, noble, rich! how lucky Georges is!"

He received the thousand francs from Florentine and returned to bet on his hoaxer. George had just passed for the fourth time when Oscar sat down by him. The other players saw with satisfaction the arrival of a new better; for all, with the instinct of gamblers, took the side of Giroudeau, the old officer of the Empire.

"Messieurs," said Georges, "you'll be punished for deserting me; I feel in the vein. Come, Oscar, we'll make an end of them!"

Georges and his partner lost five games running. After losing the thousand francs Oscar was seized with the fury of play and insisted on taking the cards himself. By the result of a chance not at all uncommon with those who play for the first time, he won. But Georges bewildered him with advice; told him when to throw the cards, and even snatched them from his hand; so that this conflict of wills and intuitions injured his vein. By three o'clock in the morning, after various changes of fortune, and still drinking punch, Oscar came down to his last hundred francs. He rose with a heavy head, completely stupefied, took a few steps forward, and fell upon a sofa in the boudoir, his eyes closing in a leaden sleep.

"Mariette," said Fanny Beaupré to Godeschal's sister, who had come in about two o'clock, "do you dine here to-morrow? Camusot and Père Cardot are coming, and we'll have some fun."

"What!" cried Florentine, "and my old fellow never told me!"

"He said he'd tell you to-morrow morning," remarked Fanny Beaupré.

"The devil take him and his orgies!" exclaimed Florentine. "He and Camusot are worse than magistrates or stage-managers. But we have very good dinners here, Mariette," she continued. "Cardot always orders them from Chevet's; bring your Duc de Maufriqueuse and we'll make them dance like Tritons."

Hearing the names of Cardot and Camusot, Oscar made an effort to throw off his sleep; but he could only mutter a few words which were not understood, and then he fell back upon the silken cushions.

"You'll have to keep him here all night," said Fanny Beaupré, laughing, to Florentine.

"Oh! poor boy! he is drunk with punch and despair both. It is the second clerk in your brother's office," she said to Mariette. "He has lost the money his master gave him for some legal affair. He wanted to drown himself; so I lent him a thousand francs, but those brigands Finot and Giroudeau won them from him. Poor innocent!"

"But we ought to wake him," said Mariette. "My brother won't make light of it, nor his master either."

"Oh, wake him if you can, and carry him off with you!" said Florentine, returning to the salon to receive the adieux of some departing guests.

Presently those who remained began what was called "character dancing," and by the time it was broad daylight, Florentine, tired out, went to bed, oblivious of Oscar, who was still in the boudoir sound asleep.

“ ‘Nephew! so he’s your nephew?’ cried Florentine,
with another burst of laughter.”

X.

ANOTHER CATASTROPHE.

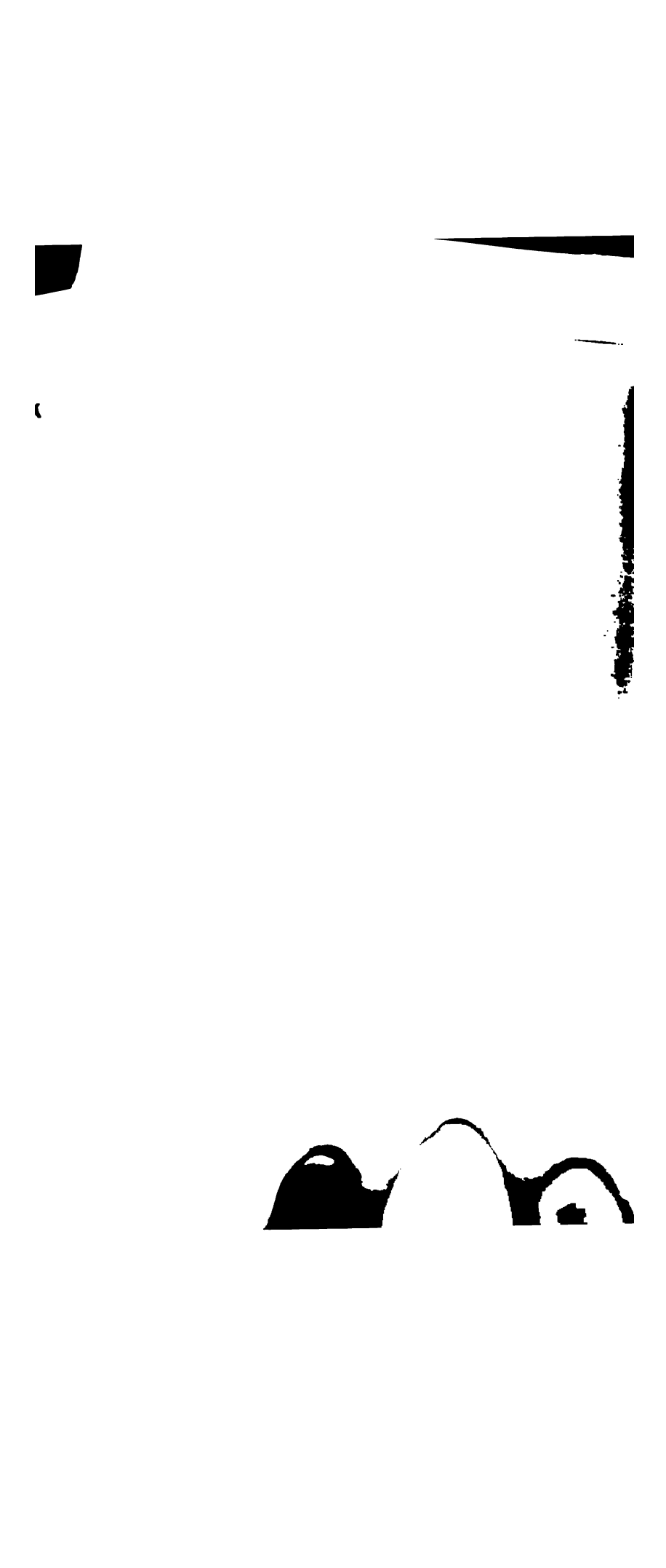
ABOUT eleven the next morning, a terrible sound awoke the unfortunate clerk. Recognizing the voice of his uncle Cardot, he thought it wise to feign sleep, and so turned his face into the yellow velvet cushions on which he had passed the night.

"Really, my little Florentine," said the old gentleman, "this is neither right nor sensible; you danced last evening in 'Les Ruines,' and you have spent the night in an orgy. That's deliberately going to work to lose your freshness. Besides which, it was ungrateful to inaugurate this beautiful apartment without even letting me know. Who knows what has been going on here?"

"Old monster!" cried Florentine, "have n't you a key that lets you in at all hours? My ball lasted till five in the morning, and you have the cruelty to come and wake me up at eleven!"

"Half-past eleven, Titine," observed Cardot, humbly. "I came out early to order a dinner fit for an archbishop at Chevet's. Just see how the carpets are stained! What sort of people did you have here?"

“ ‘Nephew!’ so he’s your nephew?’ cried Florentine,
with another burst of laughter.”





George Jones

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Priscilla Gould



"You need n't complain, for Fanny Beaupré told me you were coming to dinner with Camusot, and to please you I've invited Tullia, du Bruel, Mariette, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, Florine, and Nathan. So you'll have the four loveliest creatures ever seen behind the foot-lights; we'll dance you a *pas de Zéphire*."

"It is enough to kill you to lead such a life!" cried old Cardot; "and look at the broken glasses! What pillage! The antechamber actually makes me shudder —"

At this instant the wrathful old gentleman stopped short as if magnetized, like a bird which a snake is charming. He saw the outline of a form in a black coat through the door of the boudoir.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Cabirolle!" he said at last.

"Well, what?" she asked.

The eyes of the *danseuse* followed those of the little old man; and when she recognized the presence of the clerk she went off into such fits of laughter that not only was the old gentleman nonplussed, but Oscar was compelled to appear; for Florentine took him by the arm, still pealing with laughter at the conscience-stricken faces of the uncle and nephew.

"You here, nephew?"

"Nephew! so he's your nephew?" cried Florentine, with another burst of laughter. "You never told me about him. Why did n't Mariette carry you off?" she

said to Oscar, who stood there petrified. "What can he do now, poor boy?"

"Whatever he pleases!" said Cardot, sharply, marching to the door as if to go away.

"One moment, papa Cardot. You will be so good as to get your nephew out of a scrape into which I led him; for he played the money of his master and lost it, and I lent him a thousand francs to win it back, and he lost that too."

"Miserable boy! you lost fifteen hundred francs at play at your age?"

"Oh, uncle, uncle!" cried poor Oscar, plunged by these words into all the horrors of his position, and falling on his knees before his uncle, with clasped hands, "It is twelve o'clock! I am lost, dishonored! Monsieur Desroches will have no pity! He gave me the money for an important affair, in which his pride was concerned. I was to get a paper at the Palais in the case of Vandernes *versus* Vandernes! What will become of me? Oh, save me for the sake of my father and aunt! Come with me to Monsieur Desroches, and explain it to him; make some excuse, — anything!"

These sentences were jerked out through sobs and tears that might have moved the sphinx of Luxor.

"Old skinflint!" said the *danseuse*, who was crying, "will you let your own nephew be dishonored, — the

son of the man to whom you owe your fortune? — for his name is Oscar Husson. Save him, or Titine will deny you forever!"

"But how did he come here?" asked Cardot.

"Don't you see that the reason he forgot to go for those papers was because he was drunk and overslept himself. Georges and his cousin Frédéric took all the clerks in his office to a feast at the Rocher de Cancale."

Père Cardot looked at Florentine and hesitated.

"Come, come," she said, "you old monkey, should n't I have hid him better if there had been anything else in it?"

"There, take your five hundred francs, you scamp!" said Cardot to his nephew, "and remember, that's the last penny you'll ever get from me. Go and make it up with your master if you can. I'll return the thousand francs which you borrowed of mademoiselle; but I'll never hear another word about you."

Oscar disappeared, not wishing to hear more. Once in the street, however, he knew not where to go.

Chance which destroys men and chance which saves them were both making equal efforts for and against Oscar during that fateful morning. But he was doomed to fall before a master who forgave no failure in any affair he had once undertaken. When Mariette reached home that night, she felt alarmed at what might happen to the youth in whom her brother took interest

and she wrote a hasty note to Godeschal, telling him what had happened to Oscar and inclosing a bank bill for five hundred francs to repair his loss. The kind-hearted creature went to sleep after charging her maid to carry the little note to Desroches' office before seven o'clock in the morning. Godeschal, on his side, getting up at six and finding that Oscar had not returned, guessed what had happened. He took the five hundred francs from his own little hoard and rushed to the Palais, where he obtained a copy of the judgment and returned in time to lay it before Desroches by eight o'clock.

Meantime Desroches, who always rose at four, was in his office by seven. Mariette's maid, not finding the brother of her mistress in his bedroom, came down to the office and there met Desroches, to whom she very naturally offered the note.

"Is it about business?" he asked; "I am Monsieur Desroches.

"You can see, monsieur," replied the maid.

Desroches opened the letter and read it. Finding the five-hundred-franc note, he went into his private office furiously angry with his second clerk. About half-past seven he heard Godeschal dictating to the second head-clerk a copy of the document in question, and a few moments later the good fellow entered his master's office with triumph in his heart.

“Did Oscar Husson fetch the paper this morning from Simon?” inquired Desroches.

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Who gave him the money?”

“Why, you did, Saturday,” replied Godeschal.

“Then it rains five-hundred-franc notes,” cried Desroches. “Look here, Godeschal, you are a fine fellow, but that little Husson does not deserve such generosity. I hate idiots, but I hate still more the men who will go wrong in spite of the fatherly care which watches over them.” He gave Godeschal Mariette’s letter and the five-hundred-franc note which she had sent. “You must excuse my having opened it,” he said, “but your sister’s maid told me it was on business. Dismiss Husson.”

“Poor unhappy boy! what grief he has caused me!” said Godeschal, “that tall ne’er-do-well of a Georges Marest is his evil genius; he ought to flee him like the plague; if not, he’ll bring him to some third disgrace.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Desroches.

Godeschal then related briefly the affair of the journey to Presles.

“Ah! yes,” said the lawyer, “I remember Joseph Bridau told me that story about the time it happened. It is to that meeting that we owe the favor Monsieur de Sérizy has since shown in the matter of Joseph’s brother, Philippe Bridau.”

At this moment Moreau, to whom the case of the Vandernesse estate was of much importance, entered the office. The marquis wished to sell the land in parcels and the count was opposed to such a sale. The land-agent received therefore the first fire of Desroches' wrath against his ex-second clerk and all the threatening prophecies which he fulminated against him. The result was that this most sincere friend and protector of the unhappy youth came to the conclusion that his vanity was incorrigible.

"Make him a barrister," said Desroches. "He has only his last examination to pass. In that line, his defects might prove virtues, for self-love and vanity give tongues to half the attorneys."

At this time Clapart, who was ill, was being nursed by his wife, — a painful task, a duty without reward. The sick man tormented the poor creature, who was now doomed to learn what venomous and spiteful teasing a half-imbecile man, whom poverty had rendered craftily savage, could be capable of in the weary tête-à-tête of each endless day. Delighted to turn a sharpened arrow in the sensitive heart of the mother, he had, in a measure, studied the fears that Oscar's behavior and defects inspired in the poor woman. When a mother receives from her child a shock like that of the affair at Presles, she continues in a state of constant fear, and, by the manner in which his wife

boasted of Oscar every time he obtained the slightest success, Clapart knew the extent of her secret uneasiness, and he took pains to arouse it on every occasion.

"Well, Madame," Clapart would say. "Oscar is doing better than I even hoped. That journey to Presles was only a heedlessness of youth. Where can you find young lads who do not commit just such faults? Poor child! he bears his privations heroically! If his father had lived, he would never have had any. God grant he may know how to control his passions!" etc., etc.

While all these catastrophes were happening in the rue de Vendôme and the rue de Béthisy, Clapart, sitting in the chimney corner, wrapped in an old dressing-gown, watched his wife, who was engaged over the fire in their bedroom in simultaneously making the family broth, Clapart's *tisane*, and her own breakfast.

"*Mon Dieu!* I wish I knew how the affair of yesterday ended. Oscar was to breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale and spend the evening with a marquise —"

"Don't trouble yourself! Sooner or later you'll find out about your swan," said her husband. "Do you really believe in that marquise? Pooh! A young man who has senses and a taste for extravagance like Oscar can find such ladies as that on every bush—if he pays for them. Some fine morning you'll find yourself with a load of debt on your back."

Cardot has promised to pay for his substitute; Oscar is to dedicate his graduating thesis to him."

At this moment carriage-wheels were heard, and a hackney-coach containing Oscar and all his worldly belongings stopped before the door. The luckless young man came up at once.

"Ah! here you are, Monsieur Joli-Cœur!" cried Clapart.

Oscar kissed his mother, and held out to Moreau a hand which the latter refused to take. To this rebuff Oscar replied by a reproachful look, the boldness of which he had never shown before. Then he turned on Clapart.

"Listen to me, monsieur," said the youth, transformed into a man. "You worry my poor mother devilishly, and that's your right, for she is, unfortunately, your wife. But as for me, it is another thing. I shall be of age in a few months; and you have no rights over me even as a minor. I have never asked anything of you. Thanks to Monsieur Moreau, I have never cost you one penny, and I owe you no gratitude. Therefore, I say, let me alone!"

Clapart, hearing this apostrophe, slunk back to his sofa in the chimney corner. The reasoning and the inward fury of the young man, who had just received a lecture from his friend Godeschal, silenced the imbecile mind of the sick man.

"A momentary temptation, such as you yourself would have yielded to at my age," said Oscar to Moreau, "has made me commit a fault which Desroches thinks serious, though it is only a peccadillo. I am more provoked with myself for taking Florentine of the *Gaieté* for a marquise than I am for losing fifteen hundred francs after a little debauch in which everybody, even Godeschal, was half-seas over. This time, at any rate, I've hurt no one but myself. I'm cured of such things forever. If you are willing to help me, Monsieur Moreau, I swear to you that the six years I must still stay a clerk before I can get a practice shall be spent without —"

"Stop there!" said Moreau. "I have three children, and I can make no promises."

"Never mind, never mind," said Madame Clapart to her son, casting a reproachful glance at Moreau. "Your uncle Cardot —"

"I have no longer an uncle Cardot," replied Oscar, who related the scene in the rue de Vendôme.

Madame Clapart, feeling her legs give way under the weight of her body, staggered to a chair in the dining-room, where she fell as if struck by lightning.

"All the miseries together!" she said, as she fainted.

Moreau took the poor mother in his arms, and carried her to the bed in her chamber. Oscar remained motionless, as if crushed.

"There is nothing left for you," said Moreau, coming back to him, "but to make yourself a soldier. That idiot of a Clapart looks to me as though he could n't live three months, and then your mother will be without a penny. Ought I not, therefore, to reserve for her the little money I am able to give? It was impossible to tell you this before her. As a soldier, you'll eat plain bread and reflect on life such as it is to those who are born into it without fortune."

"I may get a lucky number," said Oscar.

"Suppose you do, what then? Your mother has well fulfilled her duty toward you. She gave you an education; she placed you on the right road, and secured you a career. You have left it. Now, what can you do? Without money, nothing; as you know by this time. You are not a man who can begin a new career by taking off your coat and going to work in your shirt-sleeves with the tools of an artisan. Besides, your mother loves you, and she would die to see you come to that."

Oscar sat down and no longer restrained his tears, which flowed copiously. At last he understood this language, so completely unintelligible to him ever since his first fault.

"Men without means ought to be perfect," added Moreau, not suspecting the profundity of that cruel sentence.

"My fate will soon be decided," said Oscar. "I draw my number the day after to-morrow. Between now and then I will decide upon my future."

Moreau, deeply distressed in spite of his stern bearing, left the household in the rue de la Cerisaie to its despair.

Three days later Oscar drew the number twenty-seven. In the interests of the poor lad the former steward of Presles had the courage to go to the Comte de Sérizy and ask for his influence to get Oscar into the cavalry. It happened that the count's son, having left the École Polytechnique rather low in his class, was appointed, as a favor, sub-lieutenant in a regiment of cavalry commanded by the Duc de Maufriigneuse. Oscar had, therefore, in his great misfortune, the small luck of being, at the Comte de Sérizy's instigation, drafted into that noble regiment, with the promise of promotion to quartermaster within a year. Chance had thus placed the ex-clerk under the command of the son of the Comte de Sérizy.

Madame Clapart, after languishing for some days, so keenly was she affected by these catastrophes, became a victim to the remorse which seizes upon many a mother whose conduct has been frail in her youth, and who, in her old age, turns to repentance. She now considered herself under a curse. She attributed the sorrows of her second marriage and the misfortunes

of her son to a just retribution by which God was compelling her to expiate the errors and pleasures of her youth. This opinion soon became a certainty to her mind. The poor woman went, for the first time in forty years, to confess herself to the Abbé Gaudron, vicar of Saint-Paul's, who led her into the practice of devotion. But so ill-used and loving a soul as that of Madame Clapart could never be anything but simply pious. The Aspasia of the Directory wanted to expiate her sins in order to draw down the blessing of God on the head of her poor Oscar, and she henceforth vowed herself to works and deeds of the purest piety. She believed she had won the attention of heaven when she saved the life of Monsieur Clapart, who, thanks to her devotion, lived on to torture her; but she chose to see, in the tyranny of that imbecile mind, a trial inflicted by the hand of one who loveth while he chasteneth.

Oscar, meantime, behaved so well that in 1830 he was first sergeant of the company of the Vicomte de Sérizy, which gave him the rank of sub-lieutenant of the line. Oscar Husson was by that time twenty-five years old. As the Royal Guard, to which his regiment was attached, was always in garrison in Paris, or within a circumference of thirty miles around the capital, he came to see his mother from time to time, and tell her his griefs; for he had the sense to see that he could never become an officer as matters then were.

At that time the cavalry grades were all being taken up by the younger sons of noble families, and men without the article to their names found promotion difficult. Oscar's sole ambition was to leave the Guards and be appointed sub-lieutenant in a regiment of the cavalry of the line. In the month of February, 1830, Madame Clapart obtained this promotion for her son through the influence of Madame la Dauphine, granted to the Abbé Gaudron, now rector of Saint-Paul's.

Although Oscar outwardly professed to be devoted to the Bourbons, in the depths of his heart he was a liberal. Therefore, in the struggle of 1830, he went over to the side of the people. This desertion, which had an importance due to the crisis in which it took place, brought him before the eyes of the public. During the excitement of triumph in the month of August he was promoted lieutenant, received the cross of the Legion of honor, and was attached as aide-de-camp to La Fayette, who gave him the rank of captain in 1832. When the amateur of the best of all possible republics was removed from the command of the National guard, Oscar Husson, whose devotion to the new dynasty amounted to fanaticism, was appointed major of a regiment sent to Africa at the time of the first expedition undertaken by the Prince-royal. The Vicomte de Sérizy chanced to be the lieutenant-colonel of this regiment. At the affair of the Makta, where

the field had to be abandoned to the Arabs, Monsieur de Sérizy was left wounded under a dead horse. Oscar, discovering this, called out to the squadron:

"Messieurs, it is going to death, but we cannot abandon our colonel."

He dashed upon the enemy, and his electrified soldiers followed him. The Arabs, in their first astonishment at this furious and unlooked-for return, allowed Oscar to seize the viscount, whom he flung across his horse, and carried off at full gallop, — receiving, as he did so, two slashes from yataghans on his left arm.

Oscar's conduct on this occasion was rewarded with the officer's cross of the Legion of honor, and by his promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He took the most affectionate care of the Vicomte de Sérizy, whose mother came to meet him on the arrival of the regiment at Toulon, where, as we know, the young man died of his wounds.

The Comtesse de Sérizy had not separated her son from the man who had shown him such devotion. Oscar himself was so seriously wounded that the surgeons whom the countess had brought with her from Paris thought best to amputate his left arm.

Thus the Comte de Sérizy was led not only to forgive Oscar for his painful remarks on the journey to Presles, but to feel himself his debtor on behalf of his son, now buried in the chapel of the château de Sérizy.

XI.

OSCAR'S LAST BLUNDER.

SOME years after the affair at Makta, an old lady, dressed in black, leaning on the arm of a man about thirty-four years of age, in whom observers would recognize a retired officer, from the loss of an arm and the rosette of the Legion of honor in his button-hole, was standing, at eight o'clock, one morning in the month of May, under the *porte-cochère* of the Lion d'Argent, rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, waiting, apparently, for the departure of a diligence. Undoubtedly Pierrotin, the master of the line of coaches running through the valley of the Oise (despatching one through Saint-Leu-Taverny and Isle-Adam to Beaumont), would scarcely have recognized in this bronzed and maimed officer the little Oscar Husson he had formerly taken to Presles. Madame Husson, at last a widow, was as little recognizable as her son. Clapart, a victim of Fieschi's machine, had served his wife better by death than by all his previous life. The idle loungeur was hanging about, as usual, on the boulevard du Temple, gazing at the show, when the explosion came. The poor widow was put upon the pension list,

made expressly for the families of the victim, at fifteen hundred francs a year.

The coach, to which were harnessed four iron-gray horses that would have done honor to the Messageries-royales, was divided into three compartments, coupé, intérieur, and rotonde, with an impériale above. It resembled those diligences called "Gondoles," which now ply, in rivalry with the railroad, between Paris and Versailles. Both solid and light, well-painted and well-kept, lined with fine blue cloth, and furnished with blinds of a Moorish pattern and cushions of red morocco, the "Swallow of the Oise" could carry, comfortably, nineteen passengers. Pierrotin, now about fifty-six years old, was little changed. Still dressed in a blue blouse, beneath which he wore a black suit, he smoked his pipe, and superintended the two porters in livery, who were stowing away the luggage in the great impériale.

"Are your places taken?" he said to Madame Clapart and Oscar, eying them like a man who is trying to recall a likeness to his memory.

"Yes, two places for the intérieur in the name of my servant, Bellejambe," replied Oscar; "he must have taken them last evening."

"Ah! monsieur is the new collector of Beaumont," said Pierrotin. "You take the place of Monsieur Margueron's nephew?"

"Yes," replied Oscar, pressing the arm of his mother, who was about to speak.

The officer wished to remain unknown for a time.

Just then Oscar thrilled at hearing the well-remembered voice of Georges Marest calling out from the street: "Pierrotin, have you one seat left?"

"It seems to me you could say 'monsieur' without cracking your throat," replied the master of the line of coaches of the Valley of the Oise, sharply.

Unless by the sound of his voice, Oscar could never have recognized the individual whose jokes had been so fatal to him. Georges, almost bald, retained only three or four tufts of hair above his ears; but these were elaborately frizzed out to conceal, as best they could, the nakedness of the skull. A fleshiness ill-placed, in other words, a pear-shaped stomach, altered the once elegant proportions of the ex-young man. Now almost ignoble in appearance and bearing, Georges exhibited the traces of disasters in love and a life of debauchery in his blotched skin and bloated, vinous features. The eyes had lost the brilliancy, the vivacity of youth which chaste or studious habits have the virtue to retain. Dressed like a man who is careless of his clothes, Georges wore a pair of shabby trousers, with straps intended for varnished boots; but his were of leather, thick-soled, ill-blackened, and of many months' wear. A faded waistcoat, a cravat,

pretentiously tied, although the material was a worn-out foulard, bespoke the secret distress to which a former dandy sometimes falls a prey. Moreover, Georges appeared at this hour of the morning in an evening coat, instead of a surtout; a sure diagnostic of actual poverty. This coat, which had seen long service at balls, had now, like its master, passed from the opulent ease of former times to daily work. The seams of the black cloth showed whitening lines; the collar was greasy; long usage had frayed the edges of the sleeves into fringes.

And yet, Georges ventured to attract attention by yellow kid gloves, rather dirty, it is true, on the outside of which a signet ring defined a large dark spot. Round his cravat, which was slipped into a pretentious gold ring, was a chain of silk, representing hair, which, no doubt, held a watch. His hat, though worn rather jauntily, revealed, more than any of the above symptoms, the poverty of a man who was totally unable to pay sixteen francs to a hat-maker, being forced to live from hand to mouth. The former admirer of Florentine twirled a cane with a chased gold knob, which was horribly battered. The blue trousers, the waistcoat of a material called "Scotch stuff," a sky-blue cravat and a pink-striped cotton shirt, expressed, in the midst of all this ruin, such a latent desire to *show-off* that the contrast was not only a sight to see, but a lesson to be learned.

"And that is Georges!" said Oscar, in his own mind, — "a man I left in possession of thirty thousand francs a year!"

"Has Monsieur *de* Pierrotin a place in the coupé?" asked Georges, ironically replying to Pierrotin's rebuff.

"No; my coupé is taken by a peer of France, the son-in-law of Monsieur Moreau, Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, his wife, and his mother-in-law. I have nothing left but one place in the intérieur."

"The devil! so peers of France still travel in your coach, do they?" said Georges, remembering his adventure with the Comte de Sérizy. "Well, I'll take that place in the intérieur."

He cast a glance of examination on Oscar and his mother, but did not recognize them.

Oscar's skin was now bronzed by the sun of Africa; his moustache was very thick and his whiskers ample; the hollows in his cheeks and his strongly marked features were in keeping with his military bearing. The rosette of an officer of the Legion of honor, his missing arm, the strict propriety of his dress, would all have diverted Georges' recollections of his former victim if he had had any. As for Madame Clapart, whom Georges had scarcely seen, ten years devoted to the exercise of the most severe piety had transformed her. No one would ever have imagined that that gray sister concealed the Aspasia of 1797.

An enormous old man, very simply dressed, though his clothes were good and substantial, in whom Oscar recognized Père Léger, here came slowly and heavily along. He nodded familiarly to Pierrotin, who appeared by his manner to pay him the respect due in all lands to millionnaires."

"Ha! ha! why, here's Père Léger! more and more preponderant!" cried Georges.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked old Léger, curtly.

"What! you don't recognize Colonel Georges, the friend of Ali pacha? We travelled together once upon a time, in company with the Comte de Sérizy."

One of the habitual follies of those who have fallen in the world is to recognize and desire the recognition of others.

"You are much changed," said the ex-farmer, now twice a millionaire.

"All things change," said Georges. "Look at the Lion d'Argent and Pierrotin's coach; they are not a bit like what they were fourteen years ago."

"Pierrotin now controls the whole service of the Valley of the Oise," replied Monsieur Léger, "and sends out five coaches. He is the *bourgeois* of Beaumont, where he keeps a hotel, at which all the diligences stop, and he has a wife and daughter who are not a bad help to him."

An old man of seventy here came out of the hotel and joined the group of travellers who were waiting to get into the coach.

"Come along, papa Reybert," said Léger, "we are only waiting now for your great man."

"Here he comes," said the steward of Presles, pointing to Joseph Bridau.

Neither Georges nor Oscar recognized the illustrious artist, for his face had the worn and haggard lines that were now famous, and his bearing was that which is given by success. The ribbon of the Legion of honor adorned his black coat, and the rest of his dress, which was extremely elegant, seemed to denote an expedition to some rural *fête*.

At this moment a clerk, with a paper in his hand, came out of the office (which was now in the former kitchen of the Lion d'Argent), and stood before the door of the empty coupé.

"Monsieur and Madame de Canalis, three places," he said. Then, moving to the door of the intérieur, he named, consecutively, "Monsieur Bellejambe, two places; Monsieur de Reybert, three places; Monsieur, — your name, if you please?" he said to Georges.

"Georges Marest," said the fallen man, in a low voice.

The clerk then moved to the rotonde, before which were grouped a number of nurses, country-people, and

petty shopkeepers, who were bidding each other adieu. Then, after bundling in the six passengers, he called to four young men who mounted to the imperial; after which he cried: "Start!" Pierrotin got up beside his driver, a young man in a blouse, who called out: "Pull!" to his animals, and the vehicle, drawn by four horses bought at Roye, mounted the rise of the faubourg Saint-Denis at a slow trot.

But no sooner had it got above Saint-Laurent than it raced like a mail-cart to Saint-Denis, which it reached in forty minutes. No stop was made at the cheese-cake inn, and the coach took the road through the valley of Montmorency.

It was at the turn into this road that Georges broke the silence which the travellers had so far maintained while observing each other.

"We go a little faster than we did fifteen years ago, hey, Père Léger?" he said, pulling out a silver watch.

"Persons are usually good enough to call me Monsieur Léger," said the millionaire.

"Why, here's our *blagueur* of the famous journey to Presles," cried Joseph Bridau. "Have you made any new campaigns in Asia, Africa, or America?"

"*Sacrebleu!* I've made the revolution of July, and that's enough for me, for it ruined me."

"Ah! you made the revolution of July!" cried the painter, laughing. "Well, I always said it never made itself."

"How people meet again!" said Monsieur Léger, turning to Monsieur de Reybert. "This, papa Reybert, is the clerk of the notary to whom you undoubtedly owe the stewardship of Presles."

"We lack Mistigris, now famous under his own name of Léon de Lora," said Joseph Bridau, "and the little young man who was stupid enough to talk to the count about those skin diseases which are now cured, and about his wife, whom he has recently left that he may die in peace."

"And the count himself, you lack him," said old Reybert.

"I'm afraid," said Joseph Bridau, sadly, "that the last journey the count will ever take will be from Presles to Isle-Adam, to be present at my marriage."

"He still drives about the park," said Reybert.

"Does his wife come to see him?" asked Léger.

"Once a month," replied Reybert. "She is never happy out of Paris. Last September she married her niece, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, on whom, since the death of her son, she spends all her affection, to a very rich young Pole, the Comte Laginski."

"To whom," asked Madame Clapart, "will Monsieur de Sérizy's property go?"

"To his wife, who will bury him," replied Georges. "The countess is still fine-looking for a woman of fifty-four years of age. She is very elegant, and, at a little distance, gives one the illusion —"

"She will always be an illusion to you," said Léger, who seemed inclined to revenge himself on his former hoaxer.

"I respect her," replied Georges. "But, by the bye, what became of that steward whom the count turned off?"

"Moreau?" said Léger; "why, he's the deputy from the Oise."

"Ha! the famous Centre man; Moreau de l'Oise?" cried Georges.

"Yes," returned Léger, "Moreau de l'Oise. He did more than you for the revolution of July, and he has since bought the beautiful estate of Pointel, between Presles and Beaumont."

"Next to the count's," said Georges. "I call that very bad taste."

"Don't speak so loud," said Monsieur de Reybert, "for Madame Moreau and her daughter, the Baronne de Canalis, and the Baron himself, the former minister, are in the coupé."

"What *dot* could he have given his daughter to induce our great orator to marry her?" said Georges.

"Something like two millions," replied old Léger.

"He always had a taste for millions," remarked Georges. "He began his pile surreptitiously at Presles —"

"Say nothing against Monsieur Moreau," cried

Oscar, hastily. "You ought to have learned before now to hold your tongue in public conveyances."

Joseph Bridau looked at the one-armed officer for several seconds; then he said, smiling: —

"Monsieur is not an ambassador, but his rosette tells us he has made his way nobly; my brother and General Giroudeau have repeatedly named him in their reports."

"Oscar Husson!" cried Georges. "Faith! if it had n't been for your voice I should never have known you."

"Ah! it was monsieur who so bravely rescued the Vicomte Jules de Sérizy from the Arabs?" said Reybert, "and for whom the count has obtained the collectorship of Beaumont while awaiting that of Pontoise?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Oscar.

"I hope you will give me the pleasure, monsieur," said the great painter, "of being present at my marriage at Isle-Adam."

"Whom do you marry?" asked Oscar, after accepting the invitation.

"Mademoiselle Léger," replied Joseph Bridau, "the granddaughter of Monsieur de Reybert. Monsieur le comte was kind enough to arrange the marriage for me. As an artist I owe him a great deal, and he wished, before his death, to secure my future, about which I did not think, myself."

"Whom did Père Léger marry?" asked Georges.

"My daughter," replied Monsieur de Reybert, "and without a *dot*."

"Ah!" said Georges, assuming a more respectful manner towards Monsieur Léger, "I am fortunate in having chosen this particular day to do the valley of the Oise. You can all be useful to me, gentlemen."

"How so?" asked Monsieur Léger.

"In this way," replied Georges. "I am employed by the '*Espérance*,' a company just formed, the statutes of which have been approved by an ordinance of the King. This institution gives, at the end of ten years, dowries to young girls, annuities to old men; it pays the education of children, and takes charge, in short, of the fortunes of everybody."

"I can well believe it," said Père Léger, smiling. "In a word, you are a runner for an insurance company."

"No, monsieur. I am the inspector-general; charged with the duty of establishing correspondents and appointing the agents of the company throughout France. I am only operating until the agents are selected; for it is a matter as delicate as it is difficult to find honest agents."

"But how did you lose your thirty thousand a year?" asked Oscar.

"As you lost your arm," replied the son of Czerni-Georges, curtly.

"Then you must have shared in some brilliant action," remarked Oscar, with a sarcasm not unmixed with bitterness.

"*Parbleu!* I've too many—shares! that's just what I want to sell."

By this time they had arrived at Saint-Leu-Taverny, where all the passengers got out while the coach changed horses. Oscar admired the liveliness which Pierrotin displayed in unhooking the traces from the whiffle-trees, while his driver cleared the reins from the leaders.

"Poor Pierrotin," thought he; "he has stuck like me, — not far advanced in the world. Georges has fallen low. All the others, thanks to speculation and to talent, have made their fortune. Do we breakfast here, Pierrotin?" he said, aloud, slapping that worthy on the shoulder.

"I am not the driver," said Pierrotin.

"What are you, then?" asked Colonel Husson.

"The proprietor," replied Pierrotin.

"Come, don't be vexed with an old acquaintance," said Oscar, motioning to his mother, but still retaining his patronizing manner. "Don't you recognize Madame Clapart?"

It was all the nobler of Oscar to present his mother

to Pierrotin, because, at that moment, Madame Moreau de l'Oise, getting out of the coupé, overheard the name, and stared disdainfully at Oscar and his mother.

"My faith! madame," said Pierrotin, "I should never have known you; nor you, either, monsieur; the sun burns black in Africa, does n't it?"

The species of pity which Oscar thus felt for Pierrotin was the last blunder that vanity ever led our hero to commit and, like his other faults, it was punished, but very gently, thus: —

Two months after his official installation at Beaumont-sur-Oise, Oscar was paying his addresses to Mademoiselle Georgette Pierrotin, whose *dot* amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand francs, and he married the pretty daughter of the proprietor of the stage-coaches of the Oise, toward the close of the winter of 1838.

The adventure of the journey to Presles was a lesson to Oscar Husson in discretion; his disaster at Florentine's card-party strengthened him in honesty and uprightness; the hardships of his military career taught him to understand the social hierarchy and to yield obedience to his lot. Becoming wise and capable, he was happy. The Comte de Sérizy, before his death, obtained for him the collectorship at Pontoise. The influence of Monsieur Moreau de l'Oise and that of the Comtesse de Sérizy and the Baron de Canalis

secured, in after years, a receiver-generalship for Monsieur Husson, in whom the Camusot family now recognize a relation.

Oscar is a commonplace man, gentle, without assumption, modest, and always keeping, like his government, to a middle course. He excites neither envy nor contempt. In short, he is the modern *bourgeois*.



VENDETTA.





VENDETTA.

TO PUTTINATI, MILANESE SCULPTOR.

I.

PROLOGUE.

IN the year 1800, toward the close of October, a foreigner, accompanied by a woman and a little girl, was standing for a long time in front of the palace of the Tuileries, near the ruins of a house recently pulled down, at the point where in our day the wing begins which was intended to unite the château of Catherine de Medici with the Louvre of the Valois.

The man stood there with folded arms and a bowed head, which he sometimes raised to look alternately at the consular palace and at his wife, who was sitting near him on a stone. Though the woman seemed wholly occupied with the little girl of nine or ten years of age, whose long black hair she amused herself by handling, she lost not a single glance of those her com-



panion cast on her. Some sentiment other than love united these two beings, and inspired with mutual anxiety their movements and their thoughts. Misery is, perhaps, the most powerful of all ties.

The stranger had one of those broad, serious heads, covered with thick hair, which we see so frequently in the pictures of the Caracci. The jet black of the hair was streaked with white. Though noble and proud, his features had a hardness which spoiled them. In spite of his evident strength, and his straight, erect figure, he looked to be over sixty years of age. His dilapidated clothes were those of a foreign country. Though the faded and once beautiful face of the wife betrayed the deepest sadness, she forced herself to smile, assuming a calm countenance whenever her husband looked at her.

The little girl was standing, though signs of weariness were on the youthful face, which was tanned by the sun. She had an Italian cast of countenance and bearing, large black eyes beneath their well arched brows, a native nobleness, and candid grace. More than one of those who passed them felt strongly moved by the mere aspect of this group, who made no effort to conceal a despair which seemed as deep as the expression of it was simple. But the flow of this fugitive sympathy, characteristic of Parisians, was dried immediately; for as soon as the stranger saw himself the

object of attention, he looked at his observer with so savage an air that the boldest loungeur hurried his step as though he had trod upon a serpent.

After standing for some time undecided, the tall stranger suddenly passed his hand across his face to brush away, as it were, the thoughts that were ploughing furrows in it. He must have taken some desperate resolution. Casting a glance upon his wife and daughter, he drew a dagger from his breast and gave it to his companion, saying in Italian: —

“I will see if the Bonapartes remember us.”

Then he walked with a slow, determined step toward the entrance of the palace, where he was, naturally, stopped by a soldier of the consular guard, with whom he was not permitted a long discussion. Seeing the man's obstinate determination, the sentinel presented his bayonet in the form of an ultimatum. Chance willed that the guard was changed at that moment, and the corporal very obligingly pointed out to the stranger the spot where the commander of the post was standing.

“Let Bonaparte know that Bartolomeo di Piombo wishes to speak with him,” said the Italian to the captain on duty.

In vain the officer represented to Bartolomeo that he could not see the First Consul without having previously requested an audience in writing; the Italian insisted that the soldier should go to Bonaparte. The officer

stated the rules of the post, and refused to comply with the order of this singular visitor. Bartolomeo frowned heavily, casting a terrible look at the captain, as if he made him responsible for the misfortunes that this refusal might occasion. Then he kept silence, folded his arms tightly across his breast, and took up his station under the portico which serves as an avenue of communication between the garden and the court-yard of the Tuilleries. Persons who will things intensely are very apt to be helped by chance. At the moment when Bartolomeo di Piombo seated himself on one of the stone posts which was near the entrance, a carriage drew up, from which Lucien Bonaparte, minister of the interior, issued.

“ Ah, Loucian, it is lucky for me I have met you ! ” cried the stranger.

These words, said in the Corsican patois, stopped Lucien at the moment when he was springing under the portico. He looked at his compatriot, and recognized him. At the first word that Bartolomeo said in his ear, he took the Corsican away with him.

Murat, Lannes, and Rapp were at that moment in the cabinet of the First Consul. As Lucien entered, followed by a man so singular in appearance as Piombo, the conversation ceased. Lucien took Napoleon by the arm and led him into the recess of a window. After exchanging a few words with his brother, the First

Consul made a sign with his hand, which Murat and Lannes obeyed by retiring. Rapp pretended not to have seen it, in order to remain where he was. Bonaparte then spoke to him sharply, and the aide-de-camp, with evident unwillingness, left the room. The First Consul, who listened for Rapp's step in the adjoining salon, opened the door suddenly, and found his aide-de-camp close to the wall of the cabinet.

"Do you choose not to understand me?" said the First Consul. "I wish to be alone with my compatriot."

"A Corsican!" replied the aide-de-camp. "I distrust those fellows too much to —"

The First Consul could not restrain a smile as he pushed his faithful officer by the shoulders.

"Well, what has brought you here, my poor Bartolomeo?" said Napoleon.

"To ask asylum and protection from you, if you are a true Corsican," replied Bartolomeo, roughly.

"What ill fortune drove you from the island? You were the richest, the most —"

"I have killed all the Portas," replied the Corsican, in a deep voice, frowning heavily.

The First Consul took two steps backward in surprise.

"Do you mean to betray me?" cried Bartolomeo, with a darkling look at Bonaparte. "Do you know that there are still four Piombos in Corsica?"

Lucien took an arm of his compatriot and shook it.

"Did you come here to threaten the savior of France?" he said.

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who kept silence. Then he looked at Piombo and said:—

"Why did you kill the Portas?"

"We had made friends," replied the man; "the Barbantis reconciled us. The day after we had drunk together to drown our quarrels, I left home because I had business at Bastia. The Portas remained in my house, and set fire to my vineyard at Longone. They killed my son Gregorio. My daughter Ginevra and my wife, having taken the sacrament that morning, escaped; the Virgin protected them. When I returned I found no house; my feet were in its ashes as I searched for it. Suddenly they struck against the body of Gregorio; I recognized him in the moonlight. 'The Portas have dealt me this blow,' I said; and, forthwith, I went to the woods, and there I called together all the men whom I had ever served,—do you hear me, Bonaparte?—and we marched to the vineyard of the Portas. We got there at five in the morning; at seven they were all before God. Giacomo declares that Éliza Vanni saved a child, Luigi. But I myself bound him in his bed before setting fire to the house. I have left the island with my wife and child without being able to discover whether, indeed, Luigi Porta is alive."

Bonaparte looked with curiosity at Bartolomeo, but without surprise.

"How many were there?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo. "All of them were your persecutors in the olden time."

These words roused no expression of hatred on the part of the two brothers.

"Ha! you are no longer Corsicans!" cried Piombo, with a sort of despair. "Farewell. In other days I protected you," he added, in a reproachful tone. "Without me, your mother would never have reached Marseille," he said, addressing himself to Bonaparte, who was silent and thoughtful, his elbow resting on the mantel-shelf.

"As a matter of duty, Piombo," said Napoleon at last, "I cannot take you under my wing. I have become the leader of a great nation; I command the Republic; I am bound to execute the laws."

"Ha! ha!" said Bartolomeo, scornfully.

"But I can shut my eyes," continued Bonaparte. "The tradition of the Vendetta will long prevent the reign of law in Corsica," he added, as if speaking to himself. "But it *must be* destroyed, at any cost."

Bonaparte was silent for a few moments, and Lucien made a sign to Piombo not to speak. The Corsican was swaying his head from right to left in deep disapproval.

"Live here, in Paris," resumed the First Consul addressing Bartolomeo; "we will know nothing of this affair. I will cause your property in Corsica to be bought, to give you enough to live on for the present. Later, before long, we will think of you. But, remember, no more vendetta! There are no woods here to fly to. If you play with daggers, you must expect no mercy. Here, the law protects all citizens and no one is allowed to do justice for himself."

"He has made himself the head of a singular nation," said Bartolomeo, taking Lucien's hand and pressing it. "But you have both recognized me in misfortune, and I am yours, henceforth, for life or death. You may dispose as you will of the Piombos."

With these words his Corsican brow unbent, and he looked about him in satisfaction.

"You are not badly off here," he said, smiling, as he meant to lodge there himself. "You are all in the same boat like a cardinal."

"Your success depends upon yourself; you can have a palace, also," said Bonaparte, watching his companion with a keen eye. "It will often happen that you shall need some faithful friend in whom I can confide."

A sigh of joy heaved the vast chest of the Corsican who held out his hand to the First Consul, saying:-

"The Corsican is in you still."

Bonaparte smiled. He looked in silence at the man

who brought, as it were, a waft of air from his own land,— from that isle where he had been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the “English party;” the land he was never to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who then took Piombo away. Lucien inquired with interest as to the financial condition of the former protector of their family. Piombo took him to a window and showed him his wife and Ginevra, seated on a heap of stones.

“We came from Fontainebleau on foot; we have not a single penny,” he said.

Lucien gave his purse to his compatriot, telling him to come to him the next day, that arrangements might be made to secure the comfort of the family. The value of Piombo’s property in Corsica, if sold, would scarcely maintain him honorably in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the time of Piombo’s arrival with his family in Paris and the following event, which would be scarcely intelligible to the reader without this narrative of the foregoing circumstances.

II.

THE STUDIO.

SERVIN, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive the idea of opening a studio for young girls who wished to take lessons in painting.

About forty years of age, a man of the purest morals, entirely given up to his art, he had married from inclination the dowerless daughter of a general. At first the mothers of his pupils brought their daughters themselves to the studio; then they were satisfied to send them alone, after knowing the master's principles and the pains he took to deserve their confidence.

It was the artist's intention to take no pupils but young ladies belonging to rich families of good position, in order to meet with no complaints as to the composition of his classes. He even refused to take girls who wished to become artists; for to them he would have been obliged to give certain instructions without which no talent could advance in the profession. Little by little his prudence and the ability with which he initiated his pupils into his art, the certainty each mother felt that her daughter was in company with none but well-bred young girls, and the fact of

the artist's marriage, gave him an excellent reputation as a teacher in society. When a young girl wished to learn to draw, and her mother asked advice of her friends, the answer was, invariably: "Send her to Servin's."

Servin became, therefore, for feminine art, a specialty; like Herbault for bonnets, Leroy for gowns, and Chevet for eatables. It was recognized that a young woman who had taken lessons from Servin was capable of judging the paintings of the Musée conclusively, of making a striking portrait, copying an ancient master, or painting a *genre* picture. The artist thus sufficed for the educational needs of the aristocracy. But in spite of these relations with the best families in Paris, he was independent and patriotic, and he maintained among them that easy, brilliant, half-ironical tone, and that freedom of judgment which characterize painters.

He had carried his scrupulous precaution into the arrangements of the locality where his pupils studied. The entrance to the attic above his apartments was walled up. To reach this retreat, as sacred as a harem, it was necessary to go up a small spiral staircase made within his own rooms. The studio, occupying nearly the whole attic floor under the roof, presented to the eye those vast proportions which surprise inquirers when, after attaining sixty feet above the

ground-floor, they expect to find an artist squeezed into a gutter.

This gallery, so to speak, was profusely lighted from above, through enormous panes of glass furnished with those green linen shades by means of which all artists arrange the light. A quantity of caricatures, heads drawn at a stroke, either in color or with the point of a knife, on walls painted in a dark gray, proved that, barring a difference in expression, the most distinguished young girls have as much fun and folly in their minds as men. A small stove with a large pipe, which described a fearful zigzag before it reached the upper regions of the roof, was the necessary and infallible ornament of the room. A shelf ran round the walls, on which were models in plaster, heterogeneously placed, most of them covered with gray dust. Here and there, above this shelf, a head of Niobe, hanging to a nail, presented her pose of woe; a Venus smiled; a hand thrust itself forward like that of a pauper asking alms; a few *écorchés*, yellowed by smoke, looked like limbs snatched over-night from a graveyard; besides these objects, pictures, drawings, lay figures, frames without paintings, and paintings without frames gave to this irregular apartment that studio physiognomy which is distinguished for its singular jumble of ornament and bareness, poverty and riches, care and neglect. The vast receptacle of an *atelier*, where

all seems small, even man, has something the air of an Opera *coulisse*; here lie ancient garments, gilded armor, fragments of stuffs, machinery. And yet there is something mysteriously grand, like thought, in it; genius and death are there; Diana and Apollo beside a skull or skeleton, beauty and destruction, poesy and reality, colors glowing in the shadows, often a whole drama, motionless and silent. Strange symbol of an artist's head!

At the moment when this history begins, a brilliant July sun was illuminating the studio, and two rays striking athwart it lengthwise, traced diaphanous gold lines in which the dust was shimmering. A dozen easels raised their sharp points like masts in a port. Several young girls were animating the scene by the variety of their expressions, their attitudes, and the differences in their toilets. The strong shadows cast by the green serge curtains, arranged according to the needs of each easel, produced a multitude of contrasts, and the piquant effects of light and shade. This group was the prettiest of all the pictures in the studio.

A fair young girl, very simply dressed, sat at some distance from her companions, working bravely, and seeming to be in dread of some mishap. No one looked at her, or spoke to her; she was much the prettiest, the most modest, and, apparently, the least rich among them. Two principal groups, distinctly sepa-



rated from each other, showed the presence of two sets or cliques, two minds even here, in this studio, where one might suppose that rank and fortune would be forgotten.

But, however that might be, these young girls, sitting or standing, in the midst of their color-boxes, playing with their brushes or preparing them, handling their dazzling palettes, painting, laughing, talking, singing, absolutely natural, and exhibiting their real selves, composed a spectacle unknown to man. One of them, proud, haughty, capricious, with black hair and beautiful hands, was casting the flame of her glance here and there at random; another, light-hearted and gay, a smile upon her lips, with chestnut hair and delicate white hands, was a typical French virgin, thoughtless, and without hidden thoughts, living her natural real life; a third was dreamy, melancholy, pale, bending her head like a drooping flower; her neighbor, on the contrary, tall, indolent, with Asiatic habits, long eyes, moist and black, said but little, and reflected, glancing covertly at the head of Antinous.

Among them, like the *jocoso* of a Spanish play, full of wit and epigrammatic sallies, another girl was watching the rest with a comprehensive glance, making them laugh, and tossing up her head, too lively and arch not to be pretty. She appeared to rule the first group of girls, who were the daughters of bankers,

notaries, and merchants,—all rich, but aware of the imperceptible though cutting slights which another group belonging to the aristocracy put upon them. The latter were led by the daughter of one of the King's ushers, a little creature, as silly as she was vain, proud of being the daughter of a man with "an office at court." She was a girl who always pretended to understand the remarks of the master at the first word, and seemed to do her work as a favor to him. She used an eyeglass, came very much dressed, and always late, and entreated her companions to speak low.

In this second group were several girls with exquisite figures and distinguished features, but there was little in their glance or expression that was simple and candid. Though their attitudes were elegant and their movements graceful, their faces lacked frankness; it was easy to see that they belonged to a world where polite manners form the character from early youth, and the abuse of social pleasures destroys sentiment and develops egotism.

But when the whole class was here assembled, child-like heads were seen among this bevy of young girls, ravishingly pure and virgin, faces with lips half-opened, through which shone spotless teeth, and on which a virgin smile was flickering. The studio then resembled not a studio, but a group of angels seated on a cloud in ether.

By mid-day, on this occasion, Servin had not appeared. For some days past he had spent most of his time in a studio which he kept elsewhere, where he was giving the last touches to a picture for the Exposition. All of a sudden Mademoiselle Amélie Thirion, the leader of the aristocrats, began to speak in a low voice, and very earnestly, to her neighbor. A great silence fell on the group of patricians, and the commercial party, surprised, were equally silent, trying to discover the subject of this earnest conference. The secret of the young *ultras* was soon revealed.

Amélie rose, took an easel which stood near hers, carried it to a distance from the noble group, and placed it close to a board partition which separated the studio from the extreme end of the attic, where all broken casts, defaced canvases and the winter supply of wood were kept. Amélie's action caused a murmur of surprise, which did not prevent her from accomplishing the change by rolling hastily to the side of the easel the stool, the box of colors, and even the picture by Prudhon, which the absent pupil was copying. After this *coup d'état* the Right began to work in silence, but the Left discoursed at length.

"What will Mademoiselle Piombo say to that?" asked a young girl of Mademoiselle Matilde Roguin, the lively oracle of the banking group.

"She's not a girl to say anything," was the reply;

"but fifty years hence she 'll remember the insult as if it were done to her the night before, and revenge it cruelly. She is a person that I, for one, don't want to be at war with."

"The slight these young ladies mean to put upon her is all the more unkind," said another young girl, "because yesterday, Mademoiselle Ginevra was very sad. Her father, they say, has just resigned. They ought not to add to her trouble, for she was very considerate of them during the Hundred Days. Never did she say a word to wound them. On the contrary, she avoided politics. But I think our *ultras* are acting more from jealousy than from party spite."

"I have a great mind to go and get Mademoiselle Piombo's easel and place it next to mine," said Matilde Roguin. She rose, but second thoughts made her sit down again.

"With a character like hers," she said, "one can't tell how she would take a civility; better wait events."

"*Ecco la,*" said the young girl with the black eyes, languidly.

The steps of a person coming up the narrow stairway sounded through the studio. The words: "Here she comes!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then the most absolute silence reigned.

To understand the importance of the ostracism imposed by the act of Amélie Thirion, it is necessary

to add that this scene took place toward the end of the month of July, 1815. The second return of the Bourbons had shaken many friendships which had held firm under the first Restoration. At this moment families, almost all divided in opinion, were renewing many of the deplorable scenes which stain the history of all countries in times of civil or religious wars. Children, young girls, old men shared the monarchial fever to which the country was then a victim. Discord glided beneath all roofs; distrust dyed with its gloomy colors the words and the actions of the most intimate friends.

Ginevra Piombo loved Napoleon to idolatry; how, then, could she hate him? The emperor was her compatriot and the benefactor of her father. The Baron di Piombo was among those of Napoleon's devoted servants who had co-operated most effectually in the return from Elba. Incapable of denying his political faith, anxious even to confess it, the old baron remained in Paris in the midst of his enemies. Ginevra Piombo was all the more open to condemnation because she made no secret of the grief which the second Restoration caused to her family. The only tears she had so far shed in life were drawn from her by the twofold news of Napoleon's captivity on the "Bellerophon," and Labédoyère's arrest.

The girls of the aristocratic group of pupils belonged

to the most devoted royalist families in Paris. It would be difficult to give an idea of the exaggerations prevalent at this epoch, and of the horror inspired by the Bonapartists. However insignificant and petty Amélie's action may now seem to be, it was at that time a very natural expression of the prevailing hatred. Ginevra Piombo, one of Servin's first pupils, had occupied the place that was now taken from her since the first day of her coming to the studio. The aristocratic circle had gradually surrounded her. To drive her from a place that in some sense belonged to her was not only to insult her, but to cause her a species of artistic pain; for all artists have a spot of predilection where they work.

Nevertheless, political prejudice was not the chief influence on the conduct of the Right clique of the studio. Ginevra, much the ablest of Servin's pupils, was an object of intense jealousy. The master testified as much admiration for the talents as for the character of this favorite pupil, who served as a conclusion to all his comparisons. In fact, without any one being able to explain the ascendancy which this young girl obtained over all who came in contact with her, she exercised over the little world around her a prestige not unlike that of Bonaparte upon his soldiers.

The aristocracy of the studio had for some days past resolved upon the fall of this queen, but no one had,

as yet, ventured to openly avoid the Bonapartist. Mademoiselle Thirion's act was, therefore, a decisive stroke, intended by her to force the others into becoming, openly, the accomplices of her hatred. Though Ginevra was sincerely loved by several of these royalists, nearly all of whom were indoctrinated at home with their political ideas, they decided, with the tactics peculiar to women, that they should do best to keep themselves aloof from the quarrel.

On Ginevra's arrival she was received, as we have said, in profound silence. Of all the young women who had, so far, come to Servin's studio, she was the handsomest, the tallest, and the best made. Her carriage and demeanor had a character of nobility and grace which commanded respect. Her face, instinct with intelligence, seemed to radiate light, so inspired was it with the enthusiasm peculiar to Corsicans, — which does not, however, preclude calmness. Her long hair and her black eyes and lashes expressed passion; the corners of her mouth, too softly defined, and the lips, a trifle too marked, gave signs of that kindliness which strong beings derive from the consciousness of their strength.

By a singular caprice of nature, the charm of her face was, in some degree, contradicted by a marble forehead, on which lay an almost savage pride, and from which seemed to emanate the moral instincts of

a Corsican. In that was the only link between herself and her native land. All the rest of her person, her simplicity, the easy grace of her Lombard beauty, was so seductive that it was difficult for those who looked at her to give her pain. She inspired such keen attraction that her old father caused her, as matter of precaution, to be accompanied to and from the studio. The only defect of this truly poetic creature came from the very power of a beauty so fully developed; she looked a woman. Marriage she had refused out of love to her father and mother, feeling herself necessary to the comfort of their old age. Her taste for painting took the place of the passions and interests which usually absorb her sex.

"You are very silent to-day, mesdemoiselles," she said, after advancing a little way among her companions. "Good-morning, my little Laure," she added, in a soft, caressing voice, approaching the young girl who was painting apart from the rest. "That head is strong, — the flesh tints a little too rosy, but the drawing is excellent."

Laure raised her head and looked tenderly at Genevra; their faces beamed with the expression of a mutual affection. A faint smile brightened the lips of the young Italian, who seemed thoughtful, and walked slowly to her easel, glancing carelessly at the drawings and paintings on her way, and bidding good-morning

to each of the young girls of the first group, not observing the unusual curiosity excited by her presence. She was like a queen in the midst of her court; she paid no attention to the profound silence that reigned among the patricians, and passed before their camp without pronouncing a single word. Her absorption seemed so great that she sat down before her easel, opened her color-box, took up her brushes, drew on her brown sleeves, arranged her apron, looked at her picture, examined her palette, without, apparently, thinking of what she was doing. All heads in the group of the *bourgeoises* were turned toward her. If the young ladies in the Thirion camp did not show their impatience with the same frankness, their sidelong glances were none the less directed on Ginevra.

"She has n't noticed it!" said Mademoiselle Roguin.

At this instant Ginevra abandoned the meditative attitude in which she had been contemplating her canvas, and turned her head toward the group of aristocrats. She measured, at a glance, the distance that now separated her from them; but she said nothing.

"It has n't occurred to her that they meant to insult her," said Matilde; "she neither colored nor turned pale. How vexed those girls will be if she likes her new place as well as the old! You are out of bounds, mademoiselle," she added, aloud, addressing Ginevra.

The Italian pretended not to hear; perhaps she really did not hear. She rose abruptly; walked with a certain deliberation along the side of the partition which separated the adjoining closet from the studio, and seemed to be examining the sash through which her light came, — giving so much importance to it that she mounted a chair to raise the green serge, which intercepted the light, much higher. Reaching that height, her eye was on a level with a slight opening in the partition, the real object of her efforts, for the glance that she cast through it can be compared only to that of a miser discovering Aladdin's treasure. Then she sprang down hastily and returned to her place, changed the position of her picture, pretended to be still dissatisfied with the light, pushed a table close to the partition, on which she placed a chair, climbed lightly to the summit of this erection, and again looked through the crevice. She cast but one glance into the space beyond, which was lighted through a skylight; but what she saw produced so strong an effect upon her that she tottered.

"Take care, Mademoiselle Ginevra, you'll fall!" cried Laure.

All the young girls gazed at the imprudent climber, and the fear of their coming to her gave her courage; she recovered her equilibrium, and replied, as she balanced herself on the shaking chair: —

"Pooh! it is more solid than a throne!"

She then secured the curtain and came down, pushed the chair and table as far as possible from the partition, returned to her easel, and seemed to be arranging it to suit the volume of light she had now thrown upon it. Her picture, however, was not in her mind, which was wholly bent on getting as near as possible to the closet, against the door of which she finally settled herself. Then she began to prepare her palette in the deepest silence. Sitting there, she could hear, distinctly, a sound which had strongly excited her curiosity the evening before, and had whirled her young imagination across vast fields of conjecture. She recognized the firm and regular breathing of a man whom she had just seen asleep. Her curiosity was satisfied beyond her expectations, but at the same time she felt saddled by an immense responsibility. Through the opening in the wall she had seen the Imperial eagle; and upon the flock bed, faintly lighted from above, lay the form of an officer of the Guard. She guessed all. Servin was hiding a proscribed man!

She now trembled lest any of her companions should come near her to examine her picture, when the regular breathing or some deeper breath might reveal to them, as it had to her, the presence of this political victim. She resolved to keep her place beside that door, trust-

ing to her wits to baffle all dangerous chances that might arise.

"Better that I should be here," thought she, "to prevent some luckless accident, than leave that poor man at the mercy of a heedless betrayal."

This was the secret of the indifference which Ginevra had apparently shown to the removal of her easel. She was inwardly enchanted, because the change had enabled her to gratify her curiosity in a natural manner; besides, at this moment, she was too keenly pre-occupied to perceive the reason of her removal.

Nothing is more mortifying to young girls, or, indeed, to all the world, than to see a piece of mischief, an insult, or a biting speech, miss its effect through the contempt or the indifference of the intended victim. It seems as if hatred to an enemy grows in proportion to the height that enemy is raised above us. Ginevra's behavior was an enigma to all her companions; her friends and enemies were equally surprised; for the former claimed for her all good qualities, except that of forgiveness of injuries. Though, of course, the occasions for displaying that vice of nature were seldom afforded to Ginevra in the life of a studio, still, the specimens she had now and then given of her vindictive disposition had left a strong impression on the minds of her companions.

After many conjectures, Mademoiselle Roguin came

to the conclusion that the Italian's silence showed a grandeur of soul beyond all praise; and the banking circle, inspired by her, formed a project to humiliate the aristocracy. They succeeded in that aim by a fire of sarcasms which presently brought down the pride of the Right coterie.

Madame Servin's arrival put a stop to the struggle. With the shrewdness that usually accompanies malice, Amélie Thirion had noticed, analyzed, and mentally commented on the extreme preoccupation of Ginevra's mind, which prevented her from even hearing the bitterly polite war of words of which she was the object. The vengeance Mademoiselle Roguin and her companions were inflicting on Mademoiselle Thirion and her group had, therefore, the fatal effect of driving the young *ultras* to search for the cause of the silence so obstinately maintained by Ginevra di Piombo. The beautiful Italian became the centre of all glances, and she was henceforth watched by friends and foes alike.

It is very difficult to hide even a slight emotion or sentiment from fifteen inquisitive and unoccupied young girls, whose wits and mischief ask for nothing better than secrets to guess, schemes to create or baffle, and who know how to find too many interpretations for each gesture, glance, and word, to fail in discovering the right one.

At this moment, however, the presence of Madame Servin produced an interlude in the drama thus played below the surface in these various young hearts, the sentiments, ideas, and progress of which were expressed by phrases that were almost allegorical, by mischievous glances, by gestures, by silence even, more intelligible than words. As soon as Madame Servin entered the studio, her eyes turned to the door near which Ginevra was seated. Under present circumstances the fact of this glance was not lost. Though at first none of the pupils took notice of it, Mademoiselle Thirion recollected it later, and it explained to her the doubt, fear, and mystery which now gave something wild and frightened to Madame Servin's eyes.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "Monsieur Servin cannot come to-day."

Then she went round complimenting each young girl, receiving in return a volume of those feminine caresses which are given as much by the tones of the voice and by looks as by gestures. She presently reached Ginevra, under the influence of an uneasiness she tried in vain to disguise. They nodded to each other in a friendly way, but said nothing; one painted, the other stood looking at the painting. The breathing of the soldier in the closet could be distinctly heard, but Madame Servin appeared not to notice

it; her feigned ignorance was so obvious that Ginevra recognized it at once for wilful deafness. Presently the unknown man turned on his pallet.

The Italian then looked fixedly at Madame Servin, who said, without the slightest change of face: —

“Your copy is as fine as the original; if I had to choose between the two I should be puzzled.”

“Monsieur Servin has not taken his wife into his confidence as to this mystery,” thought Ginevra, who, after replying to the young wife’s speech with a gentle smile of incredulity, began to hum a Corsican *canzonetta* to cover the noise that was made by the prisoner.

It was so unusual a thing to hear the studious Italian sing, that all the other young girls looked up at her in surprise. Later, this circumstance served as proof to the charitable suppositions of jealousy.

Madame Servin soon went away, and the session ended without farther events; Ginevra allowed her companions to depart, and seemed to intend to work later. But, unconsciously to herself, she betrayed her desire to be left alone by impatient glances, ill-disguised, at the pupils who were slow in leaving. Mademoiselle Thirion, a cruel enemy to the girl who excelled her in everything, guessed by the instinct of jealousy that her rival’s industry hid some purpose. By dint of watching her she was struck by the attentive air with which Ginevra seemed to be listening to

sounds that no one else had heard. The expression of impatience she now detected in her companion's eyes was like a flash of light to her.

Amélie was the last of the pupils to leave the studio; from there she went down to Madame Servin's apartment and talked with her for a moment; then she pretended to have left her bag, ran softly back to the studio, and found Ginevra once more mounted on her frail scaffolding, and so absorbed in contemplation of an unknown object that she did not hear the slight noise of her companion's footsteps. It is true that, to use an expression of Walter Scott, Amélie stepped as if on eggs. She hastily withdrew outside the door and coughed. Ginevra quivered, turned her head, saw her enemy, blushed, hastened to alter the shade to give meaning to her position, and came down from her perch leisurely. She soon after left the studio, bearing with her, in her memory, the image of a man's head, as beauteous as that of the Endymion, a masterpiece of Girodet's which she had lately copied.

"To banish so young a man! Who can he be? for he is not Marshal Ney —"

These two sentences are the simplest expression of the many ideas that Ginevra turned over in her mind for two days. On the third day, in spite of her haste to be first at the studio, she found Mademoiselle Thirion already there, having come in a carriage.

Ginevra and her enemy observed each other for a long time, but they made their faces impenetrable. Amélie had seen the handsome head of the mysterious man, but, fortunately, and unfortunately also, the Imperial eagles and uniform were so placed that she did not see them through the crevice in the partition. She was lost in conjectures. Suddenly Servin came in, much earlier than usual.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said, after glancing round the studio, "why have you placed yourself there? The light is bad. Come nearer to the rest of the young ladies and pull down that curtain a little."

Then he sat down near Laure, whose work deserved his most cordial correction.

"Well, well!" he cried; "here, indeed, is a head extremely well done. You'll be another Ginevra."

The master then went from easel to easel, scolding, flattering, jesting, and making, as usual, his jests more dreaded than his reprimands. Ginevra had not obeyed the professor's order, but remained at her post, firmly resolved not to quit it. She took a sheet of paper and began to sketch in sepia the head of the hidden man. A work done under the impulse of an emotion has always a stamp of its own. The faculty of giving to representations of nature or of thought their true coloring constitutes genius, and often, in this respect, passion takes the place of it. So, under

the circumstances in which Ginevra now found herself, the intuition which she owed to a powerful effect upon her memory, or, possibly, to necessity, that mother of great things, lent her, for the moment, a supernatural talent. The head of the young officer was dashed upon the paper in the midst of an inward trembling which she mistook for fear, and in which a physiologist would have recognized the fire of inspiration. From time to time she glanced furtively at her companions, in order to hide the sketch if any of them came near her. But in spite of her watchfulness, there was a moment when she did not see the eyeglass of the pitiless Amélie turned full upon the drawing from the shelter of a great portfolio. Mademoiselle Thirion, recognizing the portrait of the mysterious man, showed herself abruptly, and Ginevra hastily covered the sheet of paper.

"Why do you stay there in spite of my advice, mademoiselle?" asked the professor, gravely.

The pupil turned her easel so that no one but the master could see the sketch, which she placed upon it, and said, in an agitated voice:—

"Do you not think, as I do, that the light is very good? Had I not better remain here?"

Servin turned pale. As nothing escapes the piercing eyes of malice, Mademoiselle Thirion became, as it were, a sharer in the sudden emotion of master and pupil.

"You are right," said Servin; "but really," he added, with a forced laugh, "you will soon come to know more than I do."

A pause followed, during which the professor studied the drawing of the officer's head.

"It is a masterpiece! worthy of Salvator Rosa!" he exclaimed, with the energy of an artist.

All the pupils rose on hearing this, and Mademoiselle Thirion darted forward with the velocity of a tiger on its prey. At this instant, the prisoner, awakened, perhaps, by the noise, began to move. Ginevra knocked over her stool, said a few incoherent sentences, and began to laugh; but she had thrown the portrait into her portfolio before Amélie could get to her. The easel was now surrounded; Servin descanted on the beauty of the copy which his favorite pupil was then making, and the whole class was duped by this stratagem, except Amélie, who, slipping behind her companions, attempted to open the portfolio where she had seen Ginevra throw the sketch. But the latter took it up without a word, and placed it in front of her. The two young girls then looked at each other fixedly, in silence.

"Come, mesdemoiselles, take your places," said Servin. "If you wish to do as well as Mademoiselle di Piombo, you mustn't be always talking fashions and balls, and trifling away your time as you do."

When they were all reseated before their easels, Servin sat down beside Ginevra.

"Was it not better that I should be the one to discover the mystery rather than the others?" asked the girl, in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the painter, "you are one of us, a patriot; but even if you were not, I should still have confided the matter to you."

Master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra no longer feared to ask:—

"Who is he?"

"An intimate friend of Labédoyère, who contributed more than any other man, except the unfortunate colonel, to the union of the 7th regiment with the grenadiers of Elba. He was a major in the Imperial guard and was at Waterloo."

"Why not have burned his uniform and shako, and supplied him with citizen's clothes?" said Ginevra, impatiently.

"He will have them to-night."

"You ought to have closed the studio for some days."

"He is going away."

"Then they'll kill him," said the girl. "Let him stay here with you till the present storm is over. Paris is still the only place in France where a man can be hidden safely. Is he a friend of yours?" she asked.

"No; he has no claim upon me but that of his ill-luck. He came into my hands in this way. My father-in-law, who returned to the army during the campaign, met this young fellow, and very cleverly rescued him from the claws of those who captured Labédoyère. He came here to defend the general, foolish fellow!"

"Do you call him that!" cried Ginevra, casting a glance of astonishment on the painter, who was silent for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too closely watched to be able to keep him in his own house," he resumed. "So he brought him to me, by night, about a week ago. I hoped to keep him out of sight in this corner, the only spot in the house where he could be safe."

"If I can be useful to you, employ me," said Ginevra. "I know the Maréchal de Feltre."

"Well, we'll see," replied the painter.

This conversation lasted too long not to be noticed by all the other girls. Servin left Ginevra, went round once more to each easel, and gave such long lessons that he was still there at the hour when the pupils were in the habit of leaving.

"You are forgetting your bag, Mademoiselle Thirion," said the professor, running after the girl, who was now condescending to the work of a spy to satisfy her jealousy.

The latter part related to the very interesting
 subject of her experiences. And this part of her story
 was at her first point of the existence of a mystery,
 the importance of which was evident. She now and
 then gave the substance and summed the part
 which related to the former part of her story. It gave
 an impression that she had gone there she might re-
 turned and remained herself outside the door of the
 study.

III.

LABÉDOYÈRE'S FRIEND.

WHEN the painter and Ginevra thought themselves alone, Servin rapped in a peculiar manner on the door of the dark garret, which turned at once on its rusty and creaking hinges. Ginevra then saw a tall and well-made young man, whose Imperial uniform set her heart to beating. The officer had one arm in a sling, and the pallor of his face revealed sharp suffering. Seeing an unknown woman, he recoiled.

Amélie, who was unable to look into the room, the door being closed, was afraid to stay longer; she was satisfied with having heard the opening of the garret door, and departed noiselessly.

"Fear nothing," said the painter to the officer. "Mademoiselle is the daughter of a most faithful friend of the Emperor, the Baron di Piombo."

The young soldier retained no doubts as to Ginevra's patriotism as soon as he saw her.

"You are wounded," she said.

"Oh! it is nothing, mademoiselle," he replied; "the wound is healing."

Just at this moment the loud cries of the vendors of newspapers came up from the street: "Condemned to death!" They all trembled, and the soldier was the first to hear a name that turned him pale.

"Labédoyère!" he cried, falling on a stool.

They looked at each other in silence. Drops gathered on the livid forehead of the young man; he seized the black tufts of his hair in one hand with a gesture of despair, and rested his elbow on Ginevra's easel.

"After all," he said, rising abruptly, "Labédoyère and I knew what we were doing. We were certain of the fate that awaited us, whether from triumph or defeat. He dies for the Cause, and here am I, hiding myself!"

He rushed toward the door of the studio; but, quicker than he, Ginevra reached it, and barred his way.

"Can you restore the Emperor?" she said. "Do you expect to raise that giant who could not maintain himself?"

"But what can I do?" said the young man, addressing the two friends whom chance had sent to him. "I have not a relation in the world. Labédoyère was my protector and my friend; without him, I am alone. To-morrow I myself may be condemned; my only fortune was my pay. I spent my last penny to come here and try to snatch Labédoyère from his fate; death is,

therefore, a necessity for me. When a man decides to die he ought to know how to sell his life to the executioner. I was thinking just now that the life of an honest man is worth that of two traitors, and the blow of a dagger well placed may give immortality."

This spasm of despair alarmed the painter, and even Ginovia, whose own nature comprehended that of the young man. She admired his handsome face and his delightful voice, the sweetness of which was scarcely lessened by its tones of fury. Then, all of a sudden, she poured a balm upon the wounds of the unfortunate man:—

"Monsieur," she said, "as for your pecuniary distress, permit me to offer you my savings. My father is rich; I am his only child; he loves me, and I am sure he will never blame me. Have no scruple in accepting my offer; our property is derived from the Emperor; we do not own a penny that is not the result of his munificence. Is it not gratitude to him to assist his faithful soldiers? Take the sums you need as indifferently as I offer them. It is only money!" she added, in a tone of contempt. "Now, as for friends, — those you shall have."

She raised her head proudly, and her eyes shone with dazzling brilliancy.

"The head which falls to-morrow before a dozen muskets will save yours," she went on. "Wait till

the storm is over; you can then escape and take service in foreign countries if you are not forgotten here; or in the French army, if you are."

In the comfort that women give there is always a delicacy which has something maternal, foreseeing, and complete about it. But when the words of hope and peace are said with grace of gesture and that eloquence of tone which comes from the heart, and when, above all, the benefactress is beautiful, a young man does not resist. The prisoner breathed in love through all his senses. A rosy tinge colored his white cheeks; his eyes lost something of the sadness that dulled them, and he said, in a peculiar tone of voice :—

"You are an angel of goodness — But Labédoyère!" he added. "Oh, Labédoyère!"

At this cry they all three looked at one another in silence, each comprehending the others' thoughts. No longer friends of twenty minutes only, they were friends of twenty years.

"Dear friend," said Servin, "can you save him?"

"I can avenge him."

Ginevra quivered. Though the stranger was handsome, his appearance had not influenced her; the soft pity in a woman's heart for miseries that are not ignoble had stifled in Ginevra all other emotions; but to hear a cry of vengeance, to find in that proscribed being an Italian soul, devotion to Napoleon, Corsican

guarantee! — all that was, indeed, too much for her.

She looked at the officer with a respectful emotion which shook his heart. For the first time in her life a man had caused her a human emotion. She now, like other women, put the soul of the stranger on a par with the noble beauty of his features and the happy proportions of his figure, which she admired as an artist. Led by accidental curiosity to pity, from pity to a powerful interest, she came, through that interest, to such profound sensations that she felt she was in danger if she stayed there longer.

"Until to-morrow, then," she said, giving the officer a gentle smile by way of a parting consolation.

Seeing that smile, which threw a new light on Ginevra's features, the stranger forgot all else for an instant.

"To-morrow," he said, sadly; "but to-morrow, *Labédoyère* —"

Ginevra turned, put a finger on her lips, and looked at him, as if to say: "Be calm, be prudent."

And the young man cried out in his own language:

"Ah, Dio! che non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta? — who would not wish to live after seeing her?"

The peculiar accent with which he pronounced the words made Ginevra quiver.

"Are you Corsican?" she cried, returning toward him with a beating heart.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied; "but I was brought, while very young, to Genoa, and as soon as I was old enough for military service I enlisted."

The beauty of the young man, the mighty charm lent to him by his attachment to the Emperor, his wound, his misfortunes, his danger, all disappeared to Ginevra's mind, or, rather, all were blended in one sentiment, — a new and delightful sentiment. This persecuted man was a child of Corsica; he spoke its cherished language! She stood, for a moment, motionless; held by a magical sensation; before her eyes was a living picture, to which all human sentiments, united by chance, gave vivid colors. By Servin's invitation, the officer had seated himself upon a divan, and the painter, after removing the sling which supported the arm of his guest, was undoing the bandages in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shuddered when she saw the long, broad gash made by the blade of a sabre on the young man's forearm, and a moan escaped her. The stranger raised his head and smiled to her. There was something touching which went to the soul, in the care with which Servin lifted the lint and touched the lacerated flesh, while the face of the wounded man, though pale and sickly, expressed, as he looked at the girl, more pleasure than suffering. An artist would have admired, involuntarily, this opposition of sentiments, together with the contrasts produced by the

whiteness of the linen and the bared arm to the red and blue uniform of the officer.

At this moment a soft half-light pervaded the studio; but a parting ray of the evening sunlight suddenly illuminated the spot where the soldier sat, so that his noble, blanched face, his black hair, and his clothes were bathed in its glow. The effect was simple enough, but to the girl's Italian imagination it was a happy omen. The stranger seemed to her a celestial messenger, speaking the language of her own country. He thus unconsciously put her under the spell of childhood's memories, while in her heart there dawned another feeling as fresh, as pure as her own innocence. For a short, very short moment, she was motionless and dreamy, as though she were plunged in boundless thought. Then she blushed at having allowed her absorption to be noticed, exchanged one soft and rapid glance with the wounded man, and fled with the vision of him still before her eyes.

The next day was not a class-day, but Ginevra came to the studio, and the prisoner was free to sit beside her easel. Servin, who had a sketch to finish, played the part of mentor to the two young people, who talked to each other chiefly in Corsican. The soldier related the sufferings of the retreat from Moscow; for, at nineteen years of age, he had made the passage of the Beresina, and was almost the last man left of his

regiment. He described, in words of fire, the great disaster of Waterloo. His voice was music itself to the Italian girl. Brought up as a Corsican, Ginevra was, in some sense, a child of Nature; falseness was a thing unknown to her; she gave herself up without reserve to her impressions; she acknowledged them, or, rather, allowed them to be seen without the affectations of petty and calculating coquetry, characteristic of Parisian girlhood. During this day she sat more than once with her palette in one hand, her brushes in another, without touching a color. With her eyes fastened on the officer, and her lips slightly apart, she listened, in the attitude of painting a stroke which was never painted. She was not surprised to see such softness in the eyes of the young man, for she felt that her own were soft in spite of her will to keep them stern and calm. After periods like this she painted diligently, without raising her head, for he was there, near her, watching her work. The first time he sat down beside her to contemplate her silently, she said, in a voice of some emotion, after a long pause: —

“Does it amuse you to see me paint?”

That day she learned that his name was Luigi. Before separating, it was agreed between them that if, on class-days when they could not see each other, any important political event occurred, Ginevra was to in-

form him by singing certain Corsican melodies then agreed upon.

The following day Mademoiselle Thirion informed all the members of the class, under pledge of secrecy that Ginevra di Piombo had a lover, a young man who came during the hours for the lesson, and concealed himself in the garret beyond the studio.

"You, who take her part," she said to Mademoiselle Roguin, "watch her carefully, and you will see how she spends her time."

Ginevra was, therefore, observed with diabolical attention. They listened to her songs, they watched her glances. At times, when she supposed that no one saw her, a dozen pairs of eyes were furtively upon her. Thus enlightened, the girls were able to interpret truly the emotions that crossed the features of the beautiful Italian,—her gestures, the peculiar tones in which she hummed a tune, and the attention with which they saw her listen to sounds which only she could hear through the partition.

By the end of a week, Laure was the only one of Servin's fifteen pupils who had resisted the temptation of looking at Luigi through the crevice of the partition; and she, through an instinct of weakness, still defended her beautiful friend. Mademoiselle Roguin endeavored to make her wait on the staircase after the class dispersed, that she might prove to her the inti-

macy of Ginevra and the young man by entering the studio and surprising them together. But Laure refused to condescend to an act of espial which no curiosity could justify, and she consequently became the object of much reprobation.

Before long Mademoiselle Thirion made known that she thought it improper to attend the classes of a painter whose opinions were tainted with patriotism and Bonapartism (in those days the terms were synonymous), and she ceased her attendance at the studio. But, although she herself forgot Ginevra, the harm she had planted bore fruit. Little by little, the other young girls revealed to their mothers the strange events which were happening at the studio. One day Matilde Roguin did not come; the next day another girl was missing, and so on, till the last three or four who were left came no more. Ginevra and Laure, her little friend, were the sole occupants of the deserted studio for three or four days.

Ginevra did not observe this falling off, nor ask the cause of her companions' absence. As soon as she had invented means of communication with Luigi she lived in the studio in a delightful solitude, alone amid her own world, thinking only of the officer and the dangers that threatened him. Though a sincere admirer of noble characters that never betray their political faiths, she nevertheless urged Luigi to submit

himself to the royal authority, that he might be released from his present life and remain in France. But to this he would not consent. If passions are born and nourished, as they say, under the influence of romantic causes, never did so many circumstances of that kind concur in uniting two young souls by one and the same sentiment. The friendship of Ginevra for Luigi and that of Luigi for Ginevra made more progress in a month than a friendship in society would make in ten years. Adversity is the touchstone of character. Ginevra was able, therefore, to study Luigi, to know him; and before long they mutually esteemed each other. The girl, who was older than Luigi, found a charm in being courted by a youth already so grand, so tried by fate,—a youth who joined to the experience of a man the graces of adolescence. Luigi, on his side, felt an unspeakable pleasure in allowing himself to be apparently protected by a woman, now twenty-five years of age. Was it not a proof of love? The union of gentleness and pride, strength and weakness in Ginevra were, to him, irresistible attractions, and he was utterly subjugated by her. In short, before long, they loved so profoundly that they felt no need of denying to each other their love, nor yet of telling it.

One day, towards evening, Ginevra heard the accustomed signal. Luigi scratched with a pin on the wood-work in a manner that produced no more noise than a

spider might make as he fastened his thread. The signal meant that he wished to come out of his retreat.

Ginevra glanced around the studio, and not seeing Laure, opened the door; but as she did so Luigi caught sight of the little pupil and abruptly retired. Surprised at his action, Ginevra looked round, saw Laure, and said, as she went up to the girl's easel:—

"You are staying late, my dear. That head seems to me finished; you only want a high-light, — see! on that knot of hair."

"You would do me a great kindness," said Laure, in a trembling voice, "if you would give this copy a few touches; for then I could carry away with me something to remind me of you."

"Willingly," said Ginevra, painting a few strokes on the picture. "But I thought it was a long way from your home to the studio, and it is late."

"Oh! Ginevra, I am going away, never to return," cried the poor girl, sadly.

"You mean to leave Monsieur Servin!" exclaimed Ginevra, less affected, however, by this news than she would have been a month earlier.

"Have n't you noticed, Ginevra, that for some days past you and I have been alone in the studio?"

"True," said Ginevra, as if struck by a sudden recollection. "Are all those young ladies ill, or going to be married, or are their fathers on duty at court?"

"They have left Monsieur Servin," replied Laure.

"Why?"

"On your account, Ginevra."

"My account!" repeated the Corsican, springing up, with a threatening brow and her eyes flashing.

"Oh! don't be angry, my kind Ginevra," cried Laure, in deep distress. "My mother insists on my leaving the studio. The young ladies say that you have some intrigue, and that Monsieur Servin allows the young man whom you love to stay in the dark attic. I have never believed these calumnies nor said a word to my mother about them. But last night Madame Roguin met her at a ball and asked her if she still sent me here. When my mother answered yes, Madame Roguin told her the falsehoods of those young ladies. Mamma scolded me severely; she said I must have known it all, and that I had failed in proper confidence between mother and daughter by not telling her. Oh! my dear Ginevra! I, who took you for my model, oh! how grieved I am that I can't be your companion any longer."

"We shall meet again in life; girls marry —" said Ginevra.

"When they are rich," sighed Laure.

"Come and see me; my father has a fortune —"

"Ginevra," continued Laure, tenderly. "Madame Roguin and my mother are coming to see Monsieur

Servin to-morrow and reproach him; had n't you better warn him."

A thunderbolt falling at Ginevra's feet could not have astonished her more than this revelation.

"What matter is it to them?" she asked, naïvely.

"Everybody thinks it very wrong. Mamma says it is immoral."

"And you, Laure, what do you say?"

The young girl looked up at Ginevra, and their thoughts united. Laure could no longer keep back her tears; she flung herself on her friend's breast and sobbed. At this moment Servin came into the studio.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he cried, with enthusiasm, "I have finished my picture! it is now being varnished. What have you been doing, meanwhile? Where are the young ladies; are they taking a holiday, or are they in the country?"

Laure dried her tears, bowed to Monsieur Servin, and went away.

"The studio has been deserted for some days," replied Ginevra, "and the young ladies are not coming back."

"Pooh!"

"Oh! don't laugh," said Ginevra. "Listen: I am the involuntary cause of the loss of your reputation —"

The artist smiled, and said, interrupting his pupil:—

"My reputation? Why, in a few days my picture will make it at the Exposition."

"That relates to your talent," replied the girl. "I am speaking of your morality. Those young ladies have told their mothers that Luigi was shut up here, and that you lent yourself — to — our love."

"There is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The mothers of those young ladies are foolish women; if they had come straight to me I should have explained the matter. But I don't care a straw about it! Life is short, anyhow."

And the painter snapped his fingers above his head. Luigi, who had heard part of the conversation, came in.

"You have lost all your scholars," he cried. "I have ruined you!"

The artist took Luigi's hand and that of Ginevra, and joined them.

"Marry one another, my children," he said, with fatherly kindness.

They both dropped their eyes, and their silence was the first avowal they had made to each other of their love.

"You will surely be happy," said Servin. "There is nothing in life to equal the happiness of two beings like yourselves when bound together in love?"

Luigi pressed the hand of his protector without at

first being able to utter a word; but presently he said, in a voice of emotion:—

“To you I owe it all.”

“Be happy! I bless and wed you,” said the painter, with comic unction, laying his hands upon the heads of the lovers.

This little jest put an end to their strained emotion. All three looked at one another and laughed merrily. Ginevra pressed Luigi's hand in a strong clasp, with a simplicity of action worthy of the customs of her native land.

“*Ah ça*, my dear children,” resumed Servin, “you think that all will go right now, but you are much mistaken.”

The lovers looked at him in astonishment.

“Don't be anxious. I'm the only one that your romance will harm. But the fact is, Madame Servin is a little straitlaced; and I don't really see how we are to settle it with her.”

“Heavens! and I forgot to tell you,” exclaimed Ginevra, “that Madame Roguin and Laure's mother are coming here to-morrow to—”

“I understand,” said the painter.

“But you can easily justify yourself,” continued the girl, with a proud movement of her head. “Monsieur Luigi,” she added, turning to him with an arch look, “will no longer object to entering the royal

service. Well, then," after receiving a smile from the young man, "to-morrow morning I will send a petition to one of the most influential persons at the ministry of War, — a man who will refuse nothing to the daughter of the Baron di Piombo. We shall obtain a *tacit* pardon for Captain Luigi, for, of course, they will not allow him the rank of major. And then," she added, addressing Servin, "you can confound the mothers of my charitable companions by telling them the truth."

"You are an angel!" cried Servin.

While this scene was passing at the studio the father and mother of Ginevra were becoming impatient at her non-return.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra not yet home!" cried Bartolomeo.

"She was never so late before," said his wife.

The two old people looked at each other with an anxiety that was not usual with them. Too anxious to remain in one place, Bartolomeo rose and walked about the salon with an active step for a man who was over seventy-seven years of age. Thanks to his robust constitution, he had changed but little since the day of his arrival in Paris, and, despite his tall figure, he walked erect. His hair, now white and sparse, left uncovered a broad and protuberant skull, which gave a strong idea of his character and firmness. His face,

seamed with deep wrinkles, had taken, with age, a nobler expression, preserving the pallid tones which inspire veneration. The ardor of passions still lived in the fire of his eyes, while the eyebrows, which were not wholly whitened, retained their terrible mobility. The aspect of the head was stern, but it conveyed the impression that Piombo had a right to be so. His kindness, his gentleness were known only to his wife and daughter. In his functions, or in presence of strangers, he never laid aside the majesty that time had impressed upon his person; and the habit of frowning with his heavy eyebrows, contracting the wrinkles of his face, and giving to his eyes a Napoleonic fixity, made his manner of accosting others icy.

During the course of his political life he had been so generally feared that he was thought unsocial, and it is not difficult to explain the causes of that opinion. The life, morals, and fidelity of Piombo made him obnoxious to most courtiers. In spite of the fact that delicate missions were constantly intrusted to his discretion which to any other man about the court would have proved lucrative, he possessed an income of not more than thirty thousand francs from an investment on the Grand Livre. If we recall the cheapness of government securities under the Empire, and the liberality of Napoleon toward those of his faithful servants who knew how to ask for it, we can readily

see that the Baron di Piombo must have been a man of stern integrity. He owed his plumage as baron to the necessity Napoleon felt of giving him a title before sending him on missions to foreign courts.

Bartolomeo had always professed a hatred to the traitors with whom Napoleon surrounded himself, expecting to bind them to his cause by dint of victories. It was he of whom it is told that he made three steps to the door of the Emperor's cabinet after advising him to get rid of three men in France on the eve of Napoleon's departure for his celebrated and admirable campaign of 1814. After the second return of the Bourbons Bartolomeo ceased to wear the decoration of the Legion of honor. No man offered a finer image of those old Republicans, incorruptible friends to the Empire, who remained the living relics of the two most energetic governments the world has ever seen. Though the Baron di Piombo displeased mere courtiers, he had the Darus, Drouots, and Carnots with him as friends. As for the rest of the politicians, he cared not a whiff of his cigar's smoke for them, especially since Waterloo.

Bartolomeo di Piombo had bought, for the very moderate sum which Madame Mère, the Emperor's mother, had paid him for his estates in Corsica, the old mansion of the Portenduère family, in which he had made no changes. Lodged, usually, at the cost of

the government, he did not occupy this house until after the catastrophe of Fontainebleau. Following the habits of simple persons of strict virtue, the baron and his wife gave no heed to external splendor; their furniture was that which they bought with the mansion. The grand apartments, lofty, sombre, and bare, the wide mirrors in gilded frames that were almost black, the furniture of the period of Louis XIV. were in keeping with Bartolomeo and his wife, personages worthy of antiquity.

Under the Empire, and during the Hundred Days, while exercising functions that were liberally rewarded, the old Corsican had maintained a great establishment, more for the purpose of doing honor to his office than from any desire to shine himself. His life and that of his wife were so frugal, so tranquil, that their modest fortune sufficed for all their wants. To them, their daughter Ginevra was more precious than the wealth of the whole world. When, therefore, in May, 1814, the Baron di Piombo resigned his office, dismissed his crowd of servants, and closed his stable door, Ginevra, simple and unpretending like her parents, saw nothing to regret in the change. Like all great souls, she found her luxury in strength of feeling, and derived her happiness from quietness and work. These three beings loved each other too well for the externals of existence to be of value in their eyes.

Often, and especially after the second dreadful fall of Napoleon, Bartolomeo and his wife passed delightful evenings alone with their daughter, listening while she sang and played. To them there was a vast secret pleasure in the presence, in the slightest word of that child; their eyes followed her with tender anxiety; they heard her step in the court-yard, lightly as she trod. Like lovers, the three would often sit silently together, understanding thus, better than by speech, the eloquence of their souls. This profound sentiment, the life itself of the two old people, animated their every thought. Here were not three existences, but one, — one only, which, like the flame on the hearth, divided itself into three tongues of fire. If, occasionally, some memory of Napoleon's benefits and misfortunes, if the public events of the moment distracted the minds of the old people from this source of their constant solicitude, they could always talk of those interests without affecting their community of thought, for Ginevra shared their political passions. What more natural, therefore, than the ardor with which they found a refuge in the heart of their only child?

Until now the occupations of public life had absorbed the energy of the Baron di Piombo; but after leaving those employments he felt the need of casting that energy into the last sentiment that remained to him.

Apart from the ties of parentage, there may have been, unknown to these three despotic souls, another powerful reason for the intensity of their reciprocal love: it was love undivided. Ginevra's whole heart belonged to her father, as Piombo's whole heart belonged to his child; and if it be true that we are bound to one another more by our defects than by our virtues, Ginevra echoed in a marvellous manner the passions of her father. There lay the sole imperfection of this triple life. Ginevra was born unyielding of will, vindictive, and passionate, like her father in his youth.

The Corsican had taken pleasure in developing these savage sentiments in the heart of his daughter, precisely as a lion teaches the lion-cubs to spring upon their prey. But this apprenticeship to vengeance having no means of action in their family life, it came to pass that Ginevra turned the principle against her father; as a child she forgave him nothing, and he was forced to yield to her. Piombo saw nothing more than childish nonsense in these fictitious quarrels, but the child was all the while acquiring a habit of ruling her parents. In the midst, however, of the tempests which the father was fond of exciting, a look, a word of tenderness, sufficed to pacify their angry souls, and often they were never so near to a kiss as when they were threatening each other vehemently.

Nevertheless, for the last five years, Ginevra, grown wiser than her father, avoided such scenes. Her faithfulness, her devotion, the love which filled her every thought, and her admirable good sense had got the better of her temper. And yet, for all that, a very great evil had resulted from her training; Ginevra lived with her father and mother on the footing of an equality which is always dangerous.

Piombo and his wife, persons without education, had allowed Ginevra to study as she pleased. Following her caprices as a young girl, she had studied all things for a time, and then abandoned them, — taking up and leaving each train of thought at will, until, at last, painting had proved to be her dominant passion. Ginevra would have made a noble woman had her mother been capable of guiding her studies, of enlightening her mind, and bringing into harmony her gifts of nature; her defects came from the fatal education which the old Corsican had found delight in giving her.

After marching up and down the room for some time, Piombo rang the bell; a servant entered.

“Go and meet Mademoiselle Ginevra,” said his master.

“I always regret our carriage on her account,” remarked the baroness

“She said she did not want one,” replied Piombo,

looking at his wife, who, accustomed for forty years to habits of obedience, lowered her eyes and said no more.

Already a septuagenarian, tall, withered, pale, and wrinkled, the baroness exactly resembled those old women whom Schnetz puts into the Italian scenes of his *genre* pictures. She was so habitually silent that she might have been taken for another Mrs. Shandy; but, occasionally, a word, look, or gesture betrayed that her feelings still retained all the vigor and the freshness of their youth. Her dress, devoid of coquetry, was often in bad taste. She usually sat passive, buried in a low sofa, like a Sultana Valide, awaiting or admiring her Ginevra, her pride, her life. The beauty, toilet, and grace of her daughter seemed to have become her own. - All was well with her if Ginevra was happy. Her hair was white, and a few strands only were seen above her white and wrinkled forehead, or beside her hollow cheeks.

"It is now fifteen days," she said, "since Ginevra has made a practice of being late."

"Jean is so slow!" cried the impatient old man, buttoning up his blue coat and seizing his hat, which he dashed upon his head as he took his cane and departed.

"You will not get far," said his wife, calling after him.

As she spoke, the *porte-cochère* was opened and shut, and the old mother heard the steps of her Ginevra in the court-yard. Bartolomeo almost instantly reappeared, carrying his daughter, who struggled in his arms.

IV.

LOVE.

"**HERE** she is, my Gineyra, Ginevrettina, Ginevrola, mia Ginevra bella!" cried the old man.

"Oh, father, you hurt me!"

Instantly Ginevra was put down with an air of respect. She nodded her head with a graceful movement at her mother, who was frightened by her cry, as if to say, "Don't be alarmed, it was only a trick to get away."

The pale, wan face of the baroness recovered its usual tones, and even assumed a look of gayety. Piombo rubbed his hands violently, — with him the surest symptom of joy; he had taken to this habit at court when he saw Napoleon becoming angry with those of his generals and ministers who served him ill or committed blunders. When, as now, the muscles of his face relaxed, every wrinkle on his forehead expressed benevolence. These two old people presented at this moment precisely the aspect of a drooping plant to which a little water has given fresh life after long dryness.

"Now, to dinner! to dinner!" cried the baron, offering his large hand to his daughter, whom he called "Signora Piombellina," — another symptom of gayety, to which Ginevra replied by a smile.

"*Ah ça!*" said Piombo, as they left the table, "your mother has called my attention to the fact that for some weeks you have stayed much longer than usual at the studio. It seems that painting is more to you than your parents —"

"Oh, father!"

"Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us, I think," said the mother.

"A picture of your own! will you bring us that?" cried the Corsican, clapping his hands.

"Yes, I am very much occupied at the studio," replied Ginevra, rather slowly.

"What is the matter, Ginevra? You are turning pale!" cried her mother.

"No!" exclaimed the young girl in a tone of resolution, — "no! it shall never be said that Ginevra Piombo acted a lie."

Hearing this singular exclamation, Piombo and his wife looked at their daughter in astonishment.

"I love a young man," she added, in a voice of emotion.

Then, not venturing to look at her parents, she lowered her large eyelids as if to veil the fire of her eyes.

"Is he a prince?" asked her father, ironically, in a tone of voice which made the mother quail.

"No, father," she said, gently, "he is a young man without fortune."

"Is he very handsome?"

"He is very unfortunate."

"What is he?"

"Labédoyère's comrade; he was proscribed, without a refuge; Servin concealed him, and —"

"Servin is a good fellow, who has done well," cried Piombo; "but you, my daughter, you do wrong to love any man, except your father."

"It does not depend on me to love, or not to love," replied Ginevra, still gently.

"I flattered myself," continued her father, "that my Ginevra would be faithful to me until I died; and that my love and that of her mother would suffice her till then; I did not expect that our tenderness would find a rival in her soul, and —"

"Did I ever reproach you for your fanaticism for Napoleon?" said Ginevra. "Have you never loved any one but me? Did you not leave me for months together when you went on missions. I bore your absence courageously. Life has necessities to which we must all submit."

"Ginevra!"

"No, you don't love me for myself; your reproaches betray your intolerable egotism."

"You dare to blame your father's love!" exclaimed Piombo, his eyes flashing.

"Father, I don't blame you," replied Ginevra, with more gentleness than her trembling mother expected. "You have grounds for your egotism, as I have for my love. Heaven is my witness that no girl has ever fulfilled her duty to her parents better than I have done to you. I have never felt anything but love and happiness where others often see obligation. It is now fifteen years that I have never left your protecting wing, and it has been a most dear pleasure to me to charm your life. But am I ungrateful for all this in giving myself up to the joy of loving; is it ingratitude to desire a husband who will protect me hereafter?"

"What! do you reckon benefits with your father, Ginevra?" said Piombo, in a dangerous tone.

A dreadful pause then followed, during which no one dared to speak. Bartolomeo at last broke the silence by crying out in a heart-rending tone: —

"Oh! stay with us! stay with your father, your old father! I cannot have you love another man. Ginevra, you will not have long to await your liberty."

"But, father, remember that I need not leave you; we shall be two to love you; you will learn to know the man to whose care you bequeath me. You will be doubly cherished by me and by him, — by him who is my other self, by me who am all his."

"Oh! Ginevra, Ginevra!" cried the Corsican, clenching his fists; "why did you not marry when Napoleon brought me to accept the idea? Why did you not take the counts and dukes he presented to you?"

"They loved me to order," said the girl. "Besides, they would have made me live with them, and I did not wish to leave you alone."

"You don't wish to leave me alone," said Piombo, "and yet you marry! — that is leaving me alone. I know you, my daughter; in that case, you would cease to love us. *Élisa*," he added, looking at his wife, who remained motionless, and as if stupefied, "we have no longer a daughter; she wishes to marry."

The old man sat down, after raising his hands to heaven with a gesture of invoking the Divine power; then he bowed himself over as if weighed down with sorrow.

Ginevra saw his agitation, and the restraint which he put upon his anger touched her to the heart; she expected some violent crisis, some ungovernable fury; she had not armed her soul against paternal gentleness.

"Father," she said, in a tender voice, "no, you shall never be abandoned by your Ginevra. But love her a little for her own sake. If you knew how he loves me! Ah! *he* would never make me unhappy!"

"Comparisons already!" cried Piombo, in a terrible voice. "No, I can never endure the idea of your

marriage. If he loved you as you deserve to be loved he would kill me; if he did not love you, I should put a dagger through him."

The hands of the old man trembled, his lips trembled, his body trembled, but his eyes flashed lightnings. Ginevra alone was able to endure his glance, for her eyes flamed also, and the daughter was worthy of the sire.

"Oh! to love you! What man is worthy of such a life?" continued Piombo. "To love you as a father is paradise on earth; who is there worthy to be your husband?"

"*He*," said Ginevra; "he of whom I am not worthy."

"He?" repeated Piombo, mechanically; "who is *he*?"

"He whom I love."

"How can he know you enough to love you?"

"Father," said Ginevra, with a gesture of impatience, "whether he loves me or not, if I love him —"

"You love him?" cried Piombo.

Ginevra bent her head softly.

"You love him more than you love us?"

"The two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.

"Is one stronger than the other?"

"I think it is," said Ginevra.

"You shall not marry him," cried the Corsican, his voice shaking the window-panes.

"I shall marry him," replied Ginevra, tranquilly.

"Oh, God!" cried the mother, "how will this quarrel end? *Santa Virgina!* place thyself between them!"

The baron, who had been striding up and down the room, now seated himself; an icy sternness darkened his face; he looked fixedly at his daughter, and said to her, in a gentle, weakened voice, —

"Ginevra, no! you will not marry him. Oh! say nothing more to-night — let me think the contrary. Do you wish to see your father on his knees, his white hairs prostrate before you? I supplicate you —"

"Ginevra Piombo does not pass her word and break it," she replied. "I am your daughter."

"She is right," said the baroness. "We are sent into the world to marry."

"Do you encourage her in disobedience?" said the baron to his wife, who, terrified by the word, now changed to marble.

"Refusing to obey an unjust order is not disobedience," said Ginevra.

"No order can be unjust from the lips of your father, my daughter. Why do you judge my action? The repugnance that I feel is counsel from on high, sent, it may be, to protect you from some great evil."

"The only evil could be that he did not love me."

"Always *he!*"

"Yes, always," she answered. "He is my life, my

good, my thought. Even if I obeyed you he would be ever in my soul. To forbid me to marry him is to make me hate you."

"You love us not!" cried Piombo.

"Oh!" said Ginevra, shaking her head.

"Well, then, forget him; be faithful to us. After we are gone — you understand?"

"Father, do you wish me to long for your death?" cried Ginevra.

"I shall outlive you. Children who do not honor their parents die early," said the father, driven to exasperation.

"All the more reason why I should marry and be happy," she replied.

This coolness and power of argument increased Piombo's trouble; the blood rushed violently to his head, and his face turned purple. Ginevra shuddered; she sprang like a bird on her father's knee, threw her arms around his neck, and caressed his white hair, exclaiming, tenderly: —

"Oh, yes, yes, let me die first! I could never survive you, my father, my kind father!"

"Oh! my Ginevra, my own Ginevra!" replied Piombo, whose anger melted under this caress like snow beneath the rays of the sun.

"It was time you ceased," said the baroness, in a trembling voice.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah! Ginevretta! mia bella Ginevra!"

And the father played with his daughter as though she were a child of six. He amused himself by releasing the waving volume of her hair, by dandling her on his knee; there was something of madness in these expressions of his love. Presently his daughter scolded while kissing him, and tried, by jesting, to obtain admission for Luigi; but her father, also jesting, refused. She sulked, then returned to coax once more, and sulked again, until, by the end of the evening, she was forced to be content with having impressed upon her father's mind both her love for Luigi and the idea of an approaching marriage.

The next day she said no more about her love; she was more caressing to her father than she had ever been, and testified the utmost gratitude, as if to thank him for the consent he seemed to have given by his silence. That evening she sang and played to him for a long time, exclaiming now and then: "We want a man's voice for this nocturne." Ginevra was an Italian, and that says all.

At the end of a week her mother signed to her. She went; and Elisa Piombo whispered in her ear: —

"I have persuaded your father to receive him."

"Oh! mother, how happy you have made me!"

That day Ginevra had the joy of coming home on

the arm of her Luigi. The officer came out of his hiding-place for the second time only. The earnest appeals which Ginevra made to the Duc de Feltre, then minister of war, had been crowned with complete success. Luigi's name was replaced upon the roll of officers awaiting orders. This was the first great step toward better things. Warned by Ginevra of the difficulties he would encounter with her father, the young man dared not express his fear of finding it impossible to please the old man. Courageous under adversity, brave on a battlefield, he trembled at the thought of entering Piombo's salon. Ginevra felt him tremble, and this emotion, the source of which lay in her, was, to her eyes, another proof of love.

"How pale you are!" she said to him when they reached the door of the house.

"Oh! Ginevra, if it concerned my life only! —"

Though Bartolomeo had been notified by his wife of the formal presentation Ginevra was to make of her lover, he would not advance to meet him, but remained seated in his usual arm-chair, and the sternness of his brow was awful.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I bring you a person you will no doubt be pleased to see, — a soldier who fought beside the Emperor at Mont-Saint-Jean."

The baron rose, cast a sidelong glance on Luigi, and said, in a sardonic tone: —

"Monsieur is not decorated."

"I no longer wear the Legion of honor," replied Luigi, timidly, still standing.

Ginevra, mortified by her father's incivility, dragged forward a chair. The officer's answer seemed to satisfy the old servant of Napoleon. Madame Piombo, observing that her husband's eyebrows were resuming their natural position, said, by way of conversation:

"Monsieur's resemblance to a person we knew in Corsica, Nina Porta, is really surprising."

"Nothing could be more natural," replied the young man, on whose face Piombo's flaming eyes now rested.

"Nina was my sister."

"Are you Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

Bartolomeo rose, tottered, was forced to lean against a chair and beckon to his wife. Elisa Piombo came to him. Then the two old people, silently, each supporting the other, left the room, abandoning their daughter with a sort of horror.

Luigi Porta, bewildered, looked at Ginevra, who had turned as white as a marble statue, and stood gazing at the door through which her father and mother had disappeared. This departure and this silence seemed to her so solemn that, for the first time in her whole life, a feeling of fear entered her soul. She struck her hands together with great force, and said, in a voice so shaken that none but a lover could have heard the words: —

"What misery in a word!"

"In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.

"My father," she replied, "never spoke to me of our deplorable history, and I was too young when we left Corsica to know anything about it."

"Are we in *vendetta*?" asked Luigi, trembling.

"Yes. I have heard my mother say that the Portas killed my brother and burned our house. My father then massacred the whole family. How is it that you survived? — for you were tied to the posts of the bed before they set fire to the house."

"I do not know," replied Luigi. "I was taken to Genoa when six years old, and given in charge of an old man named Colonna. No detail about my family was told to me. I knew only that I was an orphan, and without property. Old Colonna was a father to me; and I bore his name until I entered the army. In order to do that, I had to show my certificate of birth in order to prove my identity. Colonna then told me, still a mere child, that I had enemies. And he advised me to take Luigi as my surname, and so evade them."

"Go, go, Luigi!" cried Ginevra. "No, stay; I must go with you. So long as you are in my father's house you have nothing to fear; but the moment you leave it, take care! you will go from danger to danger. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and if he does not lie in wait to kill you, they will."

"Ginevra," he said, "this love lives in exile between you and me?"

The girl smiled sadly and bowed her head. Presently she raised it and said with a sort of pride:—

"Oh, Luigi, our love must be pure and sincere, indeed, to give me strength to tread the path I am about to enter. But it involves a happiness that will last throughout our lives, will it not?"

Luigi answered by a smile, and pressed her hand.

Ginevra comprehended that true love should despise all vulgar protestations at such a moment. This calm and restrained expression of his feelings foreshadowed, in some sense, their strength and their duration.

The destiny of the pair was then and there decided. Ginevra foresaw a cruel struggle, but the idea of abandoning Luigi—an idea which may have floated in her soul—vanished completely. His forever, she dragged him suddenly, with a sort of desperate energy, from her father's house, and did not leave him till she saw him reach the house where Servin had engaged a modest lodging.

By the time she reached home, Ginevra had attained to that serenity which is caused by a firm resolution; no sign in her manner betrayed uneasiness. She turned on her father and mother, whom she found in the act of sitting down to dinner, a glance of exceeding gentleness devoid of harshness. She saw that

her mother had been weeping; the redness of those withered eyelids shook her heart, but she hid her emotion. No one touched the dinner which was served to them. A horror of food is one of the chief symptoms which reveal a great crisis in life. All three rose from table without having addressed a single word to one another.

When Ginevra had placed herself between her father and mother in the great and gloomy salon, Piombo tried to speak, but his voice failed him; he tried to walk, but he had no strength in his legs. He returned to his seat and rang the bell.

"Pietro," he said, at last, to the footman, "light the fire; I am cold."

Ginevra trembled, and looked at her father anxiously. The struggle within him must have been horrible, for his face was distorted. Ginevra knew the extent of the peril before her, but she did not flinch. Bartolomeo, meanwhile, cast furtive glances at his daughter, as if he feared a character whose violence was the work of his own hands.

Between such natures all things must be extreme. The certainty of some impending change in the feelings of father and daughter gave to the worn and weary face of the baroness an expression of terror.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo, at last, not daring to look at his daughter.

"That is true," she replied.

"You must choose between us. Our *vendetta* is a part of our being. Whoso does not share my vengeance is not a member of my family."

"My choice is made," replied Ginevra, calmly.

His daughter's tranquillity misled Bartolomeo.

"Oh! my dear child!" he cried, letting her see his eyes moistened with tears, the first and the only tears he ever shed in life.

"I shall be his wife," said Ginevra, abruptly.

Bartolomeo seemed dazed for a moment, but he recovered his coolness instantly, and replied:—

"The marriage will not take place in my lifetime; I will never consent to it."

Ginevra kept silence.

"Ginevra," continued the baron, "have you reflected that Luigi is the son of a man who killed your brother?"

"He was six years old when that crime was committed; he was, therefore, not guilty of it," she replied.

"He is a Porta!" cried Bartolomeo.

"I have never shared that hatred," said Ginevra, eagerly. "You did not bring me up to think a Porta must be a monster. How could I know that one of those whom you thought you had killed survived? Is it not natural that you should now yield your *vendetta* to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" repeated Piombo. "If his father had found you in your bed you would not be living now; he would have taken your life a hundred times."

"It may be so," she answered; "but his son has given me life, and more than life. To see Luigi is a happiness without which I cannot live. Luigi has revealed to me the world of sentiments. I may, perhaps, have seen faces more beautiful than his, but none has ever charmed me thus; I may have heard voices — no, no, never any so melodious! Luigi loves me; he will be my husband."

"Never," said Piombo. "I would rather see you in your coffin, Ginevra."

The old Corsican rose and began to stride up and down the salon, dropping the following sentences, one by one, after pauses which betrayed his agitation.

"You think you can bend my will. Undeceive yourself. A Porta shall never be my son; that is my decree. Let there be no farther question of this between us. I am Bartolomeo di Piombo; do you hear me, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach some mysterious meaning to those words?" she asked, coldly.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I do not fear man's justice. Corsicans explain themselves to God."

"And I," said the daughter, rising, "am Ginevra

di Piombo, and I declare that within six months I shall be the wife of Luigi Porta. You are a tyrant, my father," she added, after a terrifying pause.

Bartolomeo clenched his fists and struck them on the marble of the chimneypiece.

"Ah! we are in Paris!" he muttered.

Then he was silent, crossed his arms, bowed his head on his breast, and said not another word during the whole evening.

After once giving utterance to her will, Ginevra affected inconceivable coolness. She opened the piano and sang, played charming nocturnes and scherzos with a grace and sentiment which displayed a perfect freedom of mind, thus triumphing over her father, whose darkling face showed no softening. The old man was cruelly hurt by this tacit insult; he gathered in this one-moment the bitter fruits of the training he had given to his daughter. Respect is a barrier which protects parents as it does children, sparing grief to the former, remorse to the latter.

The next day, when Ginevra sought to leave the house at the hour when she usually went to the studio, she found the gates of the mansion closed to her. She said nothing, but soon found means to inform Luigi Porta of her father's severity. A chambermaid, who could neither read nor write, was able to carry letters between the lovers. For five days they corres-

ponded thus, thanks to the inventive shrewdness of youth.

The father and daughter seldom spoke to each other. Both were nursing in the depths of their heart a sentiment of hatred; they suffered, but they suffered proudly, and in silence. Recognizing how strong were the ties of love which bound them to each other, they each tried to break them, but without success. No gentle thought came, as formerly, to brighten the stern features of Piombo when he contemplated his Ginevra. The girl had something savage in her eye as she looked at her father; reproach sat enthroned on that innocent brow; she gave herself up, it is true, to happy thoughts, and yet, at times, remorse seemed to dull her eyes. It was not difficult to believe that she could never enjoy, peacefully, any happiness which caused sorrow to her parents.

With Bartolomeo, as with his daughter, the hesitations of this period caused by the native goodness of their souls were, nevertheless, compelled to give way before their pride and the rancor of their Corsican nature. They encouraged each other in their anger, and closed their eyes to the future. Perhaps they mutually flattered themselves that the one would yield to the other.

At last, on Ginevra's birthday, her mother, in despair at the estrangement which, day by day, as-

sumed a more serious character, meditated an attempt to reconcile the father and daughter, by help of the memories of this family anniversary. They were all three sitting in Bartolomeo's study. Ginevra guessed her mother's intention by the timid hesitation on her face, and she smiled sadly.

At this moment a servant announced two notaries, accompanied by witnesses. Bartolomeo looked fixedly at these persons, whose cold and formal faces were grating to souls so passionately strained as those of the three chief actors in this scene. The old man turned to his daughter and looked at her uneasily. He saw upon her face a smile of triumph which made him expect some shock; but, after the manner of savages, he affected to maintain a deceitful indifference as he gazed at the notaries with an assumed air of calm curiosity. The strangers sat down, after being invited to do so by a gesture of the old man.

"Monsieur is, no doubt, M. le Baron di Piombo?" began the oldest of the notaries.

Bartolomeo bowed. The notary made a slight inclination of the head, looked at Ginevra with a sly expression, took out his snuff-box, opened it, and slowly inhaled a pinch, as if seeking for the words with which to open his errand; then, while uttering them, he made continual pauses (an oratorical manœuvre very imperfectly represented by the printer's dash—).

"Monsieur," he said, "I am Monsieur Roguin, your daughter's notary, and we have come — my colleague and I — to fulfil the intention of the law and — put an end to the divisions which — appear — to exist — between yourself and Mademoiselle, your daughter, — on the subject — of — her — marriage with Monsieur Luigi Porta."

This speech, pedantically delivered, probably seemed to Monsieur Roguin so fine that his hearer could not at once understand it. He paused, and looked at Bartolomeo with that peculiar expression of the mere business lawyer, a mixture of servility with familiarity. Accustomed to feign much interest in the persons with whom they deal, notaries have at last produced upon their features a grimace of their own, which they take on and off as an official *pallium*. This mask of benevolence, the mechanism of which is so easy to perceive, irritated Bartolomeo to such an extent that he was forced to collect all the powers of his reason to prevent him from throwing Monsieur Roguin through the window. An expression of anger ran through his wrinkles, which caused the notary to think to himself: "I've produced an effect."

"But," he continued, in a honeyed tone, "Monsieur le baron, on such occasions our duties are preceded by — efforts at — conciliation — Deign, therefore, to have the goodness to listen to me — It is in evi-

dence that Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo — attains this very day — the age at which the law allows a respectful summons before proceeding to the celebration of a marriage — in spite of the non-consent of parents. Now — it is usual in families — who enjoy a certain consideration — who belong to society — who preserve some dignity — to whom, in short, it is desirable not to let the public into the secret of their differences — and who, moreover, do not wish to injure themselves by blasting with reprobation the future of a young couple (for — that is injuring themselves), it is usual, I say — among these honorable families — not to allow these summonses — to take place — or remain — a monument to — divisions which should end — by ceasing — Whenever, monsieur, a young lady has recourse to respectful summons, she exhibits a determination too marked to allow of a father — of a mother," here he turned to the baroness, "hoping or expecting that she will follow their wishes — Paternal resistance being null — by reason of this fact — in the first place — and also from its being nullified by law, it is customary — for every sensible man — after making a final remonstrance to his child — and before she proceeds to the respectful summons — to leave her at liberty to —"

Monsieur Roguin stopped, perceiving that he might talk on for two hours without obtaining any answer;

he felt, moreover, a singular emotion at the aspect of the man he was attempting to convert. An extraordinary revolution had taken place on Piombo's face; his wrinkles, contracting into narrow lines, gave him a look of indescribable cruelty, and he cast upon the notary the glance of a tiger. The baroness was mute and passive. Ginevra, calm and resolute, waited silently; she knew that the notary's voice was more potent than hers, and she seemed to have decided to say nothing. At the moment when Roguin ceased speaking, the scene had become so terrifying that the men who were there as witnesses trembled; never, perhaps, had they known so awful a silence. The notaries looked at each other, as if in consultation, and finally rose and walked to the window.

"Did you ever meet people born into the world like that?" asked Roguin of his brother notary.

"You can't get anything out of him," replied the younger man. "In your place, I should simply read the summons. That old fellow is n't a comfortable person; he is furious, and you'll gain nothing whatever by arguing with him."

Monsieur Roguin then read a stamped paper, containing the "respectful summons," prepared for the occasion; after which he proceeded to ask Bartolomeo what answer he made to it.

"Are there laws in France which destroy paternal authority? —" demanded the Corsican.

"Monsieur—" said Roguin, in his honeyed tones.

"Which tear a daughter from her father?—"

"Monsieur—"

"Which deprive an old man of his last consolation?—"

"Monsieur, your daughter only belongs to you if—"

"And kill him?—"

"Monsieur, permit me—"

There is nothing more horrible than the coolness and precise reasoning of notaries amid the many passionate scenes in which they are accustomed to take part.

The forms that Piombo saw about him seemed, to his eyes, escaped from hell; his repressed and concentrated rage knew no longer any bounds as the calm and fluted voice of the little notary uttered the words: "permit me." By a sudden movement he sprang to a dagger that was hanging to a nail above the fireplace, and rushed toward his daughter. The younger of the two notaries and one of the witnesses threw themselves before Ginevra; but Piombo knocked them violently down, his face on fire, and his eyes casting flames more terrifying than the glitter of the dagger. When Ginevra saw him approach her she looked at him fixedly with an air of triumph, and advancing slowly, knelt down. "No, no! I cannot!" he cried, flinging away the weapon, which buried itself in the wainscot.

"Well, then! have mercy! have pity!" she said. "You hesitate to be my death, and you refuse me life! Oh! father, never have I loved you as I do at this moment; give me Luigi! I ask for your consent upon my knees: a daughter can humiliate herself before her father. My Luigi, give me my Luigi, or I die!"

The violent excitement which suffocated her stopped her words, for she had no voice; her convulsive movements showed plainly that she lay, as it were, between life and death. Bartolomeo roughly pushed her from him.

"Go," he said. "The wife of Luigi Porta cannot be a Piombo. I have no daughter. I have not the strength to curse you, but I cast you off; you have no father. My Ginevra Piombo is buried here," he said, in a deep voice, pressing violently on his heart. "Go, leave my house, unhappy girl," he added, after a moment's silence. "Go, and never come into my sight again."

So saying, he took Ginevra by the arm to the gate of the house and silently put her out.

"Luigi!" cried Ginevra, entering the humble lodging of her lover, — "my Luigi, we have no other fortune than our love."

"Then am I richer than the kings of the earth!" he cried.

"My father and my mother have cast me off," she said, in deepest sadness.

"I will love you in place of them."

"Then let us be happy, — we *will* be happy!" she cried, with a gayety in which there was something dreadful.

V.

MARRIAGE.

THE day after Ginevra was driven from her father's house she went to ask Madame Servin for asylum and protection until the period fixed by law for her marriage to Luigi Porta.

Here began for her that apprenticeship to trouble which the world strews about the path of those who do not follow its conventions. Madame Servin received her very coldly, being much annoyed by the harm which Ginevra's affair had inflicted on her husband, and told her, in politely cautious words, that she must not count upon her help in future. Too proud to persist, but amazed at a selfishness hitherto unknown to her, the girl took a room in the lodging-house that was nearest to that of Luigi. The son of the Portas passed all his days at the feet of his future wife; and his youthful love, the purity of his words, dispersed the clouds from the mind of the banished daughter; the future was so beautiful as he painted it that she ended by smiling joyfully, though without forgetting her father's severity.

One morning the servant of the lodging house brought to Ginevra's room a number of trunks and packages containing stuffs, linen, clothes, and a great quantity of other articles necessary for a young wife in setting up a home of her own. In this welcome provision she recognized her mother's foresight, and, on examining the gifts, she found a purse, in which the baroness had put the money belonging to her daughter, adding to it the amount of her own savings. The purse was accompanied by a letter, in which the mother implored the daughter to forego the fatal marriage if it were still possible to do so. It had cost her, she said, untold difficulty to send these few things to her daughter; she entreated her not to think her hard if, henceforth, she were forced to abandon her to want; she feared she could never again assist her; but she blessed her and prayed for her happiness in this fatal marriage, if, indeed, she persisted in making it, assuring her that she should never cease to think of her darling child. Here the falling tears had effaced some words of the letter.

"Oh, mother!" cried Ginevra, deeply moved.

She felt the impulse to rush home, to breathe the blessed air of her father's house, to fling herself at his feet, to see her mother. She was springing forward to accomplish this wish, when Luigi entered. At the mere sight of him her filial emotion vanished; her tears

were stopped, and she no longer had the strength to abandon that loving and unfortunate youth. To be the sole hope of a noble being, to love him and then abandon him! — that sacrifice is a treachery of which young hearts are incapable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her own grief and suffering silently in her soul.

The marriage day arrived. Ginevra had no friend with her. While she was dressing, Luigi fetched the witnesses necessary to sign the certificate of marriage. These witnesses were worthy persons; one, a cavalry sergeant, was under obligations to Luigi, contracted on the battlefield, obligations which are never obliterated from the heart of an honest man; the other, a master-mason, was the proprietor of the house in which the young couple had hired an apartment for their future home. Each witness brought a friend, and all four, with Luigi, came to escort the bride. Little accustomed to social functions, and seeing nothing in the service they were rendering Luigi but a simple matter of business, they were dressed in their ordinary clothes, without any luxury, and nothing about them denoted the usual joy of a marriage procession.

Ginevra herself was dressed simply, as befitted her present fortunes; and yet her beauty was so noble and so imposing that the words of greeting died away upon the lips of the witnesses, who supposed themselves

obliged to pay her some usual compliments. They bowed to her with respect, and she returned the bow; but they did so in silence, looking at her with admiration. This reserve cast a chill over the whole party. Joy never bursts forth freely except among those who are equals. Thus chance determined that all should be dull and grave around the bridal pair; nothing reflected, outwardly, the happiness that reigned within their hearts.

The church and the mayor's office being near by, Luigi and Ginevra, followed by the four witnesses required by law, walked the distance, with a simplicity that deprived of all pomp this greatest event in social life. They saw a crowd of waiting carriages in the mayor's court-yard; and when they reached the great hall where the civil marriages take place, they found two other wedding-parties impatiently awaiting the mayor's arrival.

Ginevra sat down beside Luigi at the end of a long bench; their witnesses remained standing, for want of seats. Two brides, elaborately dressed in white, with ribbons, laces, and pearls, and crowned with orange-blossoms whose satiny petals nodded beneath their veils, were surrounded by joyous families, and accompanied by their mothers, to whom they looked up, now and then, with eyes that were content and timid both; the faces of all the rest reflected happi-

ness, and seemed to be invoking blessings on the youthful pairs. Fathers, witnesses, brothers, and sisters went and came, like a happy swarm of insects disporting in the sun. Each seemed to be impressed with the value of this passing moment of life, when the heart finds itself between two hopes, — the wishes of the past, the promises of the future.

As she watched them, Ginevra's heart swelled within her; she pressed Luigi's arm, and gave him a look. A tear rolled from the eyes of the young Corsican; never did he so well understand the joys that his Ginevra was sacrificing to him. That precious tear caused her to forget all else but him, — even the abandonment in which she sat there. Love poured down its treasures of light upon their hearts; they saw nought else but themselves in the midst of the joyous tumult; they were there alone, in that crowd, as they were destined to be, henceforth, in life. Their witnesses, indifferent to what was happening, conversed quietly on their own affairs.

"Oats are very dear," said the sergeant to the mason.

"But they have not gone up like lime, relatively speaking," replied the contractor.

Then they walked round the hall.

"How one loses time here," said the mason, replacing a thick silver watch in his fob.

Luigi and Ginevra, sitting pressed to one another, seemed like one person. A poet would have admired their two heads, inspired by the same sentiment, colored in the same tones, silent and saddened in presence of that humming happiness sparkling in diamonds, gay with flowers, — a gayety in which there was something fleeting. The joy of those noisy and splendid groups was visible; that of Ginevra and Luigi was buried in their bosom. On one side the tumult of common pleasure, on the other, the delicate silence of happy souls, — earth and heaven!

But Ginevra was not wholly free from the weaknesses of women. Superstitious as an Italian, she saw an omen in this contrast, and in her heart there lay a sense of terror, as invincible as her love.

Suddenly the office servant, in the town livery, opened a folding-door. Silence reigned, and his voice was heard, like the yapping of a dog, calling Monsieur Luigi da Porta and Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo. This caused some embarrassment to the young pair. The celebrity of the bride's name attracted attention, and the spectators seemed to wonder that the wedding was not more sumptuous. Ginevra rose, took Luigi's arm, and advanced firmly, followed by the witnesses. A murmur of surprise, which went on increasing, and a general whispering reminded Ginevra that all present were wondering at the absence of her parents; her father's wrath seemed present to her.

"Call in the families," said the mayor to the clerk whose business it was to read aloud the certificates.

"The father and mother protest," replied the clerk, phlegmatically.

"On both sides?" inquired the mayor.

"The groom is an orphan."

"Where are the witnesses?"

"Here," said the clerk, pointing to the four men, who stood with arms folded, like so many statues.

"But if the parents protest—" began the mayor.

"The respectful summons has been duly served," replied the clerk, rising, to lay before the mayor the papers annexed to the marriage certificate.

This bureaucratic discussion had something blighting about it; in a few words it contained the whole story. The hatred of the Portas and the Piombos and their terrible passions were inscribed on this page of the civil law as the annals of a people (contained, it may be, in one word only, — Napoleon, Robespierre) are engraven on a tombstone. Ginevra trembled. Like the dove on the face of the waters, having no place to rest its feet but the ark, so Ginevra could take refuge only in the eyes of Luigi from the cold and dreary waste around her.

The mayor assumed a stern, disapproving air, and his clerk looked up at the couple with malicious curiosity. No marriage was ever so little festal. Like

other human things when deprived of their accessories, it became a simple act in itself, great only in thought.

After a few questions, to which the bride and bridegroom responded, and a few words mumbled by the mayor, and after signing the registers, with their witnesses, duly, Luigi and Ginevra were made one. Then the wedded pair walked back through two lines of joyous relations who did not belong to them, and whose only interest in their marriage was the delay caused to their own wedding by this gloomy bridal. When, at last, Ginevra found herself in the mayor's court-yard, under the open sky, a sigh escaped her breast.

"Can a lifetime of devotion and love suffice to prove my gratitude for your courage and tenderness, my Ginevra?" said Luigi.

At these words, said with tears of joy, the bride forgot her sufferings; for she had indeed suffered in presenting herself before the public to obtain a happiness her parents refused to sanction.

"Why should others come between us?" she said with an artlessness of feeling that delighted Luigi.

A sense of accomplished happiness now made the step of the young pair lighter; they saw neither heaven, nor earth, nor houses; they flew, as it were, on wings to the church. When they reached a dark little chapel in one corner of the building, and stood before a plain,

undecorated altar, an old priest married them. There, as in the mayor's office, two other marriages were taking place, still pursuing them with pomp. The church, filled with friends and relations, echoed with the roll of carriages, and the hum of beadles, sextons, and priests. Altars were resplendent with sacramental luxury; the wreaths of orange-flowers that crowned the figures of the Virgin were fresh. Flowers, incense, gleaming tapers, velvet cushions embroidered with gold, were everywhere. When the time came to hold above the heads of Luigi and Ginevra the symbol of eternal union, — that yoke of satin, white, soft, brilliant, light for some, lead for most, — the priest looked about him in vain for the acolytes whose place it was to perform that joyous function. Two of the witnesses fulfilled it for them. The priest addressed a hasty homily to the pair on the perils of life, on the duties they must, some day, inculcate upon their children, — throwing in, at this point, an indirect reproach to Ginevra on the absence of her parents; then, after uniting them before God, as the mayor had united them before the law, he left the now married couple.

“God bless them!” said Vergniaud, the sergeant, to the mason, when they reached the church porch. “No two creatures were ever more fitted for one another. The parents of the girl are foolish. I don't know a braver soldier than Colonel Luigi. If the whole

army had behaved like him, *l'autre* would be here still."

This blessing of the old soldier, the only one bestowed upon their marriage-day, shed a balm on Ginevra's heart.

They parted with hearty shakings of hand; Luigi thanked his landlord.

"Adieu, *mon brave*," he said to the sergeant. "I thank you."

"I am now and ever at your service, colonel, — soul, body, horses, and carriages; all that is mine is yours."

"How he loves you!" said Ginevra.

Luigi now hurried his bride to the house they were to occupy. Their modest apartment was soon reached; and there, when the door closed upon them, Luigi took his wife in his arms, exclaiming, —

"Oh, my Ginevra! for now you are mine, here is our true wedding. Here," he added, "all things will smile upon us."

Together they went through the three rooms contained in their lodging. The room first entered served as salon and dining-room in one; on the right was a bedchamber, on the left a large study which Luigi had arranged for his wife; in it she found easels, color-boxes, lay-figures, casts, pictures, portfolios, — in short, the paraphernalia of an artist.

"So here I am to work!" she said, with an expression of childlike happiness.

She looked long at the hangings and the furniture, turning again and again to thank Luigi, for there was something that approached magnificence in the little retreat. A bookcase contained her favorite books; a piano filled an angle of the room. She sat down upon a divan, drew Luigi to her side, and said, in a caressing voice, her hand in his, —

"You have good taste."

"Those words make me happy," he replied.

"But let me see all," said Ginevra, to whom Luigi had made a mystery of the adornment of the rooms.

They entered the nuptial chamber, fresh and white as a virgin.

"Oh! come away," said Luigi, smiling.

"But I wish to see all."

And the imperious Ginevra looked at each piece of furniture with the minute care of an antiquary examining a coin; she touched the silken hangings, and went over every article with the artless satisfaction of a bride in the treasures of her wedding outfit.

"We begin by ruining ourselves," she said, in a half-joyous, half-anxious tone.

"True! for all my back-pay is there," replied Luigi. "I have mortgaged it to a worthy fellow named Gignonnet."

"Why did you do so?" she said, in a tone of reproach, through which could be heard her inward satisfaction. "Do you believe I should be less happy in a garret? But," she added, "it is all charming, and — it is ours!"

Luigi looked at her with such enthusiasm that she lowered her eyes.

"Now let us see the rest," she cried.

Above these three rooms, under the roof, was a study for Luigi, a kitchen, and a servant's-room. Ginevra was much pleased with her little domain, although the view from the windows was limited by the high wall of a neighboring house, and the court-yard, from which their light was derived, was gloomy. But the two lovers were so happy in heart, hope so adorned their future, that they chose to see nothing but what was charming in their hidden nest. They were there in that vast house, lost in the immensity of Paris, like two pearls in their shell in the depths of ocean; to all others it might have seemed a prison; to them it was paradise.

The first few days of their union were given to love. The effort to turn at once to work was too difficult; they could not resist the charm of their own passion. Luigi lay for hours at the feet of his wife, admiring the color of her hair, the moulding of her forehead, the enchanting socket of her eyes, the purity and

whiteness of the two arches beneath which the eyes themselves turned slowly, expressing the happiness of a satisfied love. Ginevra caressed the hair of her Luigi, never weary of gazing at what she called his *beltà folgorante*, and the delicacy of his features. She was constantly charmed by the nobility of his manners, as she herself attracted him by the grace of hers.

They played together, like children, with nothings, — nothings that brought them ever back to their love, — ceasing their play only to fall into a reverie of the *far niente*. An air sung by Ginevra reproduced to their souls the enchanting lights and shadows of their passion. Together, uniting their steps as they did their souls, they roamed about the country, finding everywhere their love, — in the flowers, in the sky, in the glowing tints of the setting sun; they read it in even the capricious vapors which met and struggled in the ether. Each day resembled in nothing its predecessors; their love increased, and still increased, because it was a true love. They had tested each other in what seemed only a short time; and, instinctively, they recognized that their souls were of a kind whose inexhaustible riches promised for the future unceasing joys.

Theirs was love in all its artlessness, with its interminable conversations, unfinished speeches, long

silences, oriental repose, and oriental ardor. Luigi and Ginevra comprehended love. Love is like the ocean: seen superficially, or in haste, it is called monotonous by common souls, whereas some privileged beings can pass their lives in admiring it, and in finding, ceaselessly, the varying phenomena that enchant them.

Soon, however, prudence and foresight drew the young couple from their Eden; it was necessary to work to live. Ginevra, who possessed a special talent for imitating old paintings, took up the business of copying, and soon found many customers among the picture-dealers. Luigi, on his side, sought long and actively for occupation, but it was hard for a young officer whose talents had been restricted to the study of strategy to find anything to do in Paris.

At last, weary of vain efforts, his soul filled with despair at seeing the whole burden of their subsistence falling on Ginevra, it occurred to him to make use of his handwriting, which was excellent. With a persistency of which he saw an example in his wife, he went round among the lawyers and notaries of Paris, asking for papers to copy. The frankness of his manners and his situation interested many in his favor; he soon obtained enough work to be obliged to find young men to assist him; and this employment became, little by little, a regular business. The profits of his office

and the sale of Ginevra's pictures gave the young couple a competence of which they were justly proud, for it was the fruit of their industry.

This, to the busy pair, was the happiest period of their lives. The days flowed rapidly by, filled with occupation and the joys of their love. At night, after working all day, they met with delight in Ginevra's studio. Music refreshed their weariness. No expression of regret or melancholy obscured the happy features of the young wife, and never did she utter a complaint. She appeared to her Luigi with a smile upon her lips and her eyes beaming. Each cherished a ruling thought which would have made them take pleasure in a labor still more severe; Ginevra said in her heart that she worked for Luigi, and Luigi the same for Ginevra.

Sometimes, in the absence of her husband, the thought of the perfect happiness she might have had if this life of love could have been lived in presence of her father and mother overcame the young wife; and then, as she felt the full power of remorse, she dropped into melancholy; mournful pictures passed like shadows across her imagination; she saw her old father alone, or her mother weeping in secret lest the inexorable Piombo should perceive her tears. The two white, solemn heads rose suddenly before her, and the thought came that never again should she see them

except in memory. This thought pursued her like a presentiment.

She celebrated the anniversary of her marriage by giving her husband a portrait he had long desired, — that of his Ginevra, painted by herself. Never had the young artist done so remarkable a work. Aside from the resemblance, the glow of her beauty, the purity of her feelings, the happiness of love were there depicted by a sort of magic. This masterpiece of her art and her joy was a votive offering to their wedded felicity.

Another year of ease and comfort went by. The history of their life may be given in three words: **THEY WERE HAPPY.** No event happened to them of sufficient importance to be recorded.



VI.

RETRIBUTION.

At the beginning of the year 1819 the picture-dealers requested Ginevra to give them something beside copies; for competition had so increased that they could no longer sell her work to advantage. Madame Porta then perceived the mistake she had made in not exercising her talent for *genre* painting, which might, by this time, have brought her reputation. She now attempted portrait-painting. But here she was forced to compete against a crowd of artists in greater need of money than herself. However, as Luigi and Ginevra had laid by a few savings, they were not, as yet, uneasy about the future.

Toward the end of the winter of that year Luigi worked without intermission. He, too, was struggling against competitors. The payment for writing had so decreased that he found it impossible to employ assistance; he was forced, therefore, to work a much longer time himself to obtain the same emolument. His wife had finished several pictures which were not without merit; but the dealers were scarcely buying

those of artists with reputations; consequently, her paintings had little chance. Ginevra offered them for almost nothing, but without success.

The situation of the household now began to be alarming. The souls of husband and wife floated on the ocean of their happiness, love overwhelmed them with its treasures, while poverty rose, like a skeleton, amid their harvest of joy. Yet, all the while, they hid from each other their secret anxiety. When Ginevra felt like weeping as she watched Luigi's worn and suffering face, she redoubled her caresses; and Luigi, keeping his dark forebodings in the depths of his soul, expressed to his Ginevra the tenderest love. They sought a compensation for their troubles in exalting their feelings; and their words, their joys, their caresses became suffused, as it were, with a species of frenzy. They feared the future. What feeling can be compared in strength with that of a passion which may cease on the morrow, killed by death or want? When they talked together of their poverty each felt the necessity of deceiving the other, and they fastened with mutual ardor on the slightest hope.

One night Ginevra woke and missed Luigi from her side. She rose in terror. A faint light shining on the opposite wall of the little court-yard revealed to her that her husband was working in his study at night.

Luigi was now in the habit of waiting till his wife was asleep, and then going up to his garret to write. Four o'clock struck. Ginevra lay down again, and pretended to sleep. Presently Luigi returned, overcome with fatigue and drowsiness. Ginevra looked sadly on the beautiful, worn face, where toil and care were already drawing lines of wrinkles.

"It is for me he spends his nights in writing," she said to herself, weeping.

A thought dried her tears. She would imitate Luigi. That same day she went to a print-shop, and, by help of a letter of recommendation she had obtained from Élie Magus, one of her picture-dealers, she obtained an order for the coloring of lithographs. During the day she painted her pictures and attended to the cares of her household; then, when night came, she colored the engravings. This loving couple entered their nuptial bed only to deceive each other; both feigned sleep, and left it, — Luigi, as soon as he thought his wife was sleeping, Ginevra as soon as he had gone.

One night Luigi, burning with a sort of fever, induced by a toil under which his strength was beginning to give way, opened the casement of his garret to breathe the morning air, and shake off, for a moment, the burden of his care. Happening to glance downward, he saw the reflection of Ginevra's lamp on the

opposite wall, and the poor fellow guessed the truth. He went down, stepping softly, and surprised his wife in her studio, coloring engravings.

"Oh, Ginevra!" he cried.

She gave a convulsive bound in her chair, and blushed.

"Could I sleep while you were wearing yourself out with toil?" she said.

"But to me alone belongs the right to work in this way," he answered.

"Could I be idle," she asked, her eyes filling with tears, "when I know that every mouthful we eat costs a drop of your blood? I should die if I could not add my efforts to yours. All should be in common between us: pains and pleasures, both."

"She is cold!" cried Luigi, in despair. "Wrap your shawl closer round you, my own Ginevra; the night is damp and chilly."

They went to the window, the young wife leaning on the breast of her beloved, who held her round the waist, and, together, in deep silence, they gazed upward at the sky, which the dawn was slowly brightening. Clouds of a grayish hue were moving rapidly; the East was growing luminous.

"See!" said Ginevra. "It is an omen. We shall be happy."

"Yes, in heaven," replied Luigi, with a bitter

smile. "Oh, Ginevra! you who deserved all the treasures upon earth —"

"I have your heart," she said, in tones of joy.

"Ah! I complain no more!" he answered, straining her tightly to him, and covering with kisses the delicate face, which was losing the freshness of youth, though its expression was still so soft, so tender that he could not look at it and not be comforted.

"What silence!" said Ginevra, presently. "Dear friend, I take great pleasure in sitting up. The majesty of Night is so contagious, it awes, it inspires. There is I know not what great power in the thought: all sleep, I wake."

"Oh, my Ginevra," he cried, "it is not to-night alone I feel how delicately moulded is your soul. But see, the dawn is shining, — come and sleep."

"Yes," replied Ginevra, "if I do not sleep alone. I suffered too much that night I first discovered that you were waking while I slept."

The courage with which these two young people fought with misery received for a while its due reward; but an event which usually crowns the happiness of a household to them proved fatal. Ginevra had a son, who was, to use the popular expression, "as beautiful as the day." The sense of motherhood doubled the strength of the young wife. Luigi borrowed money to meet the expenses of Ginevra's confinement. At

first she did not feel the fresh burden of their situation; and the pair gave themselves wholly up to the joy of possessing a child. It was their last happiness.

Like two swimmers uniting their efforts to breast a current, these two Corsican souls struggled courageously; but sometimes they gave way to an apathy which resembled the sleep that precedes death. Soon they were obliged to sell their jewels. Poverty appeared to them suddenly, — not hideous, but plainly clothed, almost easy to endure; its voice had nothing terrifying; with it came neither spectres, nor despair, nor rags; but it made them lose the memory and the habits of comfort; it dried the springs of pride. Then, before they knew it, came want, — want in all its horror, indifferent to its rags, treading underfoot all human sentiments.

Seven or eight months after the birth of the little Bartolomeo, it would have been hard to see in the mother who suckled her sickly babe the original of the beautiful portrait, the sole remaining ornament of the squalid home. Without fire through a hard winter, the graceful outlines of Ginevra's figure were slowly destroyed; her cheeks grew white as porcelain, and her eyes dulled as though the springs of life were drying up within her. Watching her shrunken, discolored child, she felt no suffering but for that young misery; and Luigi had no courage to smile upon his son.

"I have wandered over Paris," he said, one day. "I know no one; can I ask help of strangers? Vergniaud, my old sergeant, is concerned in a conspiracy, and they have put him in prison; besides, he has already lent me all he could spare. As for our landlord, it is over a year since he asked me for any rent."

"But we are not in want," replied Ginevra, gently, affecting calmness.

"Every hour brings some new difficulty," continued Luigi, in a tone of terror.

Another day Luigi took Ginevra's pictures, her portrait, and the few articles of furniture which they could still exist without, and sold them for a miserable sum, which prolonged the agony of the hapless household for a time. During these days of wretchedness Ginevra showed the sublimity of her nature and the extent of her resignation.

Stoically she bore the strokes of misery; her strong soul held her up against all woes; she worked with unflinching hand beside her dying son, performed her household duties with marvellous activity, and sufficed for all. She was even happy, still, when she saw on Luigi's lips a smile of surprise at the cleanliness she produced in the one poor room where they had taken refuge.

"Dear, I kept this bit of bread for you," she said, one evening, when he returned, worn-out.

“And you?”

“I? I have dined, dear Luigi; I want nothing more.”

And the tender look on her beseeching face urged him more than her words to take the food of which she had deprived herself.

Luigi kissed her, with one of those kisses of despair that were given in 1793 between friends as they mounted the scaffold. In such supreme moments two beings see each other, heart to heart. The hapless Luigi, comprehending suddenly that his wife was starving, was seized with the fever which consumed her. He shuddered, and went out, pretending that some business called him; for he would rather have drunk the deadliest poison than escape death by eating that last morsel of bread that was left in his home.

He wandered wildly about Paris; amid the gorgeous equipages, in the bosom of that flaunting luxury that displays itself everywhere; he hurried past the windows of the money-changers where gold was glittering; and at last he resolved to sell himself to be a substitute for military service, hoping that this sacrifice would save Ginevra, and that her father, during his absence, would take her home.

He went to one of the agents who manage these transactions, and felt a sort of happiness in recognizing an old officer of the Imperial guard.



"It is two days since I have eaten anything," he said to him in a slow, weak voice. "My wife is dying of hunger, and has never uttered one word of complaint; she will die smiling, I think. For God's sake, comrade," he added, bitterly, "buy me in advance; I am robust; I am no longer in the service, and I —"

The officer gave Luigi a sum on account of that which he promised to procure for him. The wretched man laughed convulsively as he grasped the gold, and ran with all his might, breathless, to his home, crying out at times: —

"Ginevra! Oh, my Ginevra!"

It was almost night when he reached his wretched room. He entered very softly, fearing to cause too strong an emotion to his wife, whom he had left so weak. The last rays of the sun, entering through the garret window, were fading from Ginevra's face as she sat sleeping in her chair, and holding her child upon her breast.

"Wake, my dear one," he said, not observing the infant, which shone, at that moment, with supernatural light.

Hearing that voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, met Luigi's look, and smiled; but Luigi himself gave a cry of horror; he scarcely recognized his wife, now half mad. With a gesture of savage energy he showed

her the gold. Ginevra began to laugh mechanically; but suddenly she cried, in a dreadful voice: —

“The child, Luigi, he is cold!”

She looked at her son and swooned. The little Bartolomeo was dead. Luigi took his wife in his arms, without removing the child, which she clasped with inconceivable force; and after laying her on the bed he went out to seek help.

“Oh! my God!” he said, as he met his landlord on the stairs. “I have gold, gold, and my child has died of hunger, and his mother is dying, too! Help me!”

He returned like one distraught to his wife, leaving the worthy mason, and also the neighbors who heard him to gather a few things for the needs of so terrible a want, hitherto unknown, for the two Corsicans had carefully hidden it from a feeling of pride.

Luigi had cast his gold upon the floor and was kneeling by the bed on which lay his wife.

“Father! take care of my son, who bears your name,” she was saying in her delirium.

“Oh, my angel! be calm,” said Luigi, kissing her; “our good days are coming back to us.”

“My Luigi,” she said, looking at him with extraordinary attention, “listen to me. I feel that I am dying. My death is natural; I suffered too much; besides, a happiness so great as mine has to be paid

for. Yes, my Luigi, be comforted. I have been so happy that if I were to live again I would again accept our fate. I am a bad mother; I regret you more than I regret my child — My child!" she added, in a hollow voice.

Two tears escaped her dying eyes, and suddenly she pressed the little body she had no power to warm.

"Give my hair to my father, in memory of his Ginevra," she said. "Tell him I have never blamed him."

Her head fell upon her husband's arm.

"No, you cannot die!" cried Luigi. "The doctor is coming. We have food. Your father will take you home. Prosperity is here. Stay with us, angel!"

But the faithful heart, so full of love, was growing cold. Ginevra turned her eyes instinctively to him she loved, though she was conscious of nought else. Confused images passed before her mind, now losing memory of earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she clasped his icy hand tightly, and more tightly still, as though she strove to save herself from some precipice down which she feared to fall.

"Dear," she said, at last, "you are cold; I will warm you."

She tried to put his hand upon her heart, but died.

Two doctors, a priest, and several neighbors came into the room, bringing all that was necessary to save

the poor couple and calm their despair. These strangers made some noise in entering; but after they had entered, an awful silence filled the room.

While that scene was taking place, Bartolomeo and his wife were sitting in their antique chairs, each at a corner of the vast fireplace, where a glowing fire scarcely warmed the great spaces of their salon. The clock told midnight.

For some time past the old couple had lost the ability to sleep. At the present moment they sat there silent, like two persons in their dotage, gazing about them at things they did not see. Their deserted salon, so filled with memories to them, was feebly lighted by a single lamp which seemed expiring. Without the sparkling of the flame upon the hearth, they might soon have been in total darkness.

A friend had just left them; and the chair on which he had been sitting, remained where he left it, between the two Corsicans. Piombo was casting glances at that chair, — glances full of thoughts, crowding one upon another like remorse, — for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo watched the expressions that now began to cross her husband's pallid face. Though long accustomed to divine his feelings from the changeful agitations of his face, they seemed to-night so threatening, and anon so melancholy that

she felt she could no longer read a soul that was now incomprehensible, even to her.

Would Bartolomeo yield, at last, to the memories awakened by that chair? Had he been shocked to see a stranger in that chair, used for the first time since his daughter left him? Had the hour of his mercy struck, — that hour she had vainly prayed and waited for till now?

These reflections shook the mother's heart successively. For an instant her husband's countenance became so terrible that she trembled at having used this simple means to bring about a mention of Ginevra's name. The night was wintry; the north wind drove the snowflakes so sharply against the blinds that the old couple fancied that they heard a gentle rustling. Ginevra's mother dropped her head to hide her tears. Suddenly a sigh burst from the old man's breast; his wife looked at him; he seemed to her crushed. Then she risked speaking — for the second time in three long years — of his daughter.

"Ginevra may be cold," she said, softly.

Piombo quivered.

"She may be hungry," she continued.

The old man dropped a tear.

"Perhaps she has a child and cannot suckle it; her milk is dried up!" said the mother, in accents of despair.

"Let her come! let her come to me!" cried Piombo.
"Oh! my precious child, thou hast conquered me."

The mother rose as if to fetch her daughter. At that instant the door opened noisily, and a man, whose face no longer bore the semblance of humanity, stood suddenly before them.

"Dead! Our two families were doomed to exterminate each other. Here is all that remains of her," he said, laying Ginevra's long black hair upon the table.

The old people shook and quivered as if a stroke of lightning had blasted them.

Luigi no longer stood before them.

"He has spared me a shot, for he is dead," said Bartolomeo, slowly, gazing on the ground at his feet.





STUDY OF A WOMAN.







STUDY OF A WOMAN.

TO THE MARQUIS JEAN-CHARLES DI NEGRO.

THE Marquise de Listomère is one of those young women who have been brought up in the spirit of the Restoration. She has principles, she fasts, takes the sacrament, and goes to balls and operas very elegantly dressed; her confessor permits her to combine the mundane with sanctity. Always in conformity with the Church and with the world, she presents a living image of the present day, which seems to have taken the word "legality" for its motto. The conduct of the marquise shows precisely enough religious devotion to attain under a new Maintenon to the gloomy piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to adopt the habits of gallantry of the first years of that reign, should it ever be revived. At the present moment she is strictly virtuous from policy, possibly from inclination. Married for the last seven years to the Marquis de Listomère, one of those deputies who expect a peerage, she may also consider that



such conduct will promote the ambitions of her family. Some women are reserving their opinion of her until the moment when Monsieur de Listomère becomes a peer of France, when she herself will be thirty-six years of age, — a period of life when most women discover that they are the dupes of social laws.

The marquis is a rather insignificant man. He stands well at court; his good qualities are as negative as his defects; the former can no more make him a reputation for virtue than the latter can give him the sort of glamour cast by vice. As deputy, he never speaks, but he votes *right*. He behaves in his own home as he does in the Chamber. Consequently, he is held to be one of the best husbands in France. Though not susceptible of lively interest, he never scolds, unless, to be sure, he is kept waiting. His friends have named him "dull weather," — aptly enough, for there is neither clear light nor total darkness about him. He is like all the ministers who have succeeded one another in France since the Charter. A woman with principles could not have fallen into better hands. It is certainly a great thing for a virtuous woman to have married a man incapable of follies.

Occasionally some fops have been sufficiently impertinent to press the hand of the marquise while dancing with her. They gained nothing in return but contemptuous glances; all were made to feel the shock

of that insulting indifference which, like a spring frost, destroys the germs of flattering hopes. Beaux, wits, and fops, men whose sentiments are fed by sucking their canes, those of a great name, or a great fame, those of the highest or the lowest rank in her own world, they all blanch before her. She has conquered the right to converse as long and as often as she chooses with the men who seem to her agreeable, without being entered on the tablets of gossip. Certain coquettish women are capable of following a plan of this kind for seven years in order to gratify their fancies later; but to suppose any such reservations in the Marquise de Listomère would be to calumniate her.

I have had the happiness of knowing this phoenix. She talks well; I know how to listen; consequently I please her, and I go to her parties. That, in fact, was the object of my ambition.

Neither plain nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a dazzling skin, and very red lips; she is tall and well-made; her foot is small and slender, and she does not put it forth; her eyes, far from being dulled like those of so many Parisian women, have a gentle glow which becomes quite magical if, by chance, she is animated. A soul is then divined behind that rather indefinite form. If she takes an interest in the conversation she displays a grace which is otherwise buried beneath the precautions of cold demeanor, and

then she is charming. She does not seek success, but she obtains it. We find that for which we do not seek: that saying is so often true that some day it will be turned into a proverb. It is, in fact, the moral of this adventure, which I should not allow myself to tell if it were not echoing at the present moment through all the *salons* of Paris.

The Marquise de Listomère danced, about a month ago, with a young man as modest as he is lively, full of good qualities, but exhibiting, chiefly, his defects. He is ardent, but he laughs at ardor; he has talent, and he hides it; he plays the learned man with aristocrats, and the aristocrat with learned men. Eugène de Rastignac is one of those extremely clever young men who try all things, and seem to sound others to discover what the future has in store. While awaiting the age of ambition, he scoffs at everything; he has grace and originality, two rare qualities because the one is apt to exclude the other. On this occasion he talked for nearly half an hour with Madame de Listomère, without any predetermined idea of pleasing her. As they followed the caprices of conversation, which, beginning with the opera of "Guillaume Tell," had reached the topic of the duties of women, he looked at the marquise, more than once, in a manner that embarrassed her; then he left her and did not speak to her again for the rest of the evening. He danced,

played at *écarté*, lost some money, and went home to bed. I have the honor to assure you that the affair happened precisely thus. I add nothing, and I suppress nothing.

The next morning Rastignac woke late and stayed in bed, giving himself up to one of those matutinal reveries in the course of which a young man glides like a sylph under many a silken, or cashmere, or cotton drapery. The heavier the body from its weight of sleep, the more active the mind. Rastignac finally got up, without yawning over-much as many ill-bred persons are apt to do. He rang for his valet, ordered tea, and drank immoderately of it when it came; which will not seem extraordinary to persons who like tea; but to explain the circumstance to others, who regard that beverage as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was, by this time, writing letters. He was comfortably seated, with his feet more frequently on the andirons than, properly, on the rug. Ah! to have one's feet on the polished bar which connects the two griffins of a fender, and to think of our love in our dressing-gown is so delightful a thing that I deeply regret the fact of having neither mistress, nor fender, nor dressing-gown.

The first letter which Eugène wrote was soon finished; he folded and sealed it, and laid it before him without adding the address. The second letter, begun

at eleven o'clock, was not finished till mid-day. The four pages were closely filled.

"That woman keeps running in my head," he muttered, as he folded this second epistle and laid it before him, intending to direct it as soon as he had ended his involuntary reverie.

He crossed the two flaps of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, slipped his hands into the pockets of his red cashmere trousers, and lay back in a delightful easy-chair with side wings, the seat and back of which described an angle of one hundred and twenty degrees. He stopped drinking tea and remained motionless, his eyes fixed on the gilded hand which formed the knob of his shovel, but without seeing either hand or shovel. He ceased even to poke the fire, — a vast mistake! Is n't it one of our greatest pleasures to play with the fire when we think of women? Our minds find speeches in those tiny blue flames which suddenly dart up and babble on the hearth. We interpret as we please the strong, harsh tones of a "burgundian."

Here I must pause to put before all ignorant persons an explanation of that word, derived from a very distinguished etymologist who wishes his name kept secret.

"Burgundian" is the name given, since the reign of Charles VI., to those noisy detonations, the result of

which is to fling upon the carpet or the clothes a little coal or ember, the trifling nucleus of a conflagration. Heat or fire releases, they say, a bubble of air left in the heart of the wood by a gnawing worm. *Inde amor, inde burgundus.* We tremble when we see the structure we had so carefully erected between the logs rolling down like an avalanche. Oh! to build and stir and play with fire when we love is the material development of our thoughts.

It was at this moment that I entered the room. Rastignac gave a jump and said: —

“Ah! there you are, dear Horace; how long have you been here?”

“Just come.”

“Ah!”

He took up the two letters, directed them, and rang for his servant.

“Take these,” he said, “and deliver them.”

Joseph departed without a word; admirable servant!

We began to talk of the expedition to Morea, to which I was anxious to be appointed as physician. Eugène remarked that I should lose a great deal of time if I left Paris. We then conversed on various matters, and I think you will be glad if I suppress the conversation.

When the Marquise de Listomère rose, about half-past two in the afternoon of that day, her waiting-maid,

Caroline, gave her a letter which she read while Caroline was doing her hair (an imprudence which many young women are thoughtless enough to commit).

"Dear angel of love," said the letter, "treasure of my life and happiness —"

At these words the marquise was about to fling the letter in the fire; but there came into her head a fancy — which all virtuous women will readily understand — to see how a man who began a letter in that style could possibly end it. When she had turned the fourth page and read it, she let her arms drop like a person much fatigued.

"Caroline, go and ask who left this letter."

"Madame, I received it myself from the valet of Monsieur le Baron de Rastignac."

After that there was silence for some time.

"Does Madame intend to dress?" asked Caroline at last.

"No — He is certainly a most impertinent man," reflected the marquise.

I request all women to imagine for themselves the reflections of which this was the first.

Madame de Listomère ended hers by a formal decision to forbid her porter to admit Monsieur de Rastignac, and to show him, herself, something more than disdain when she met him in society; for his insolence far surpassed that of other men which

the marquise had ended by overlooking. At first she thought of keeping the letter; but on second thoughts she burned it.

"Madame has just received such a fine love-letter; and she read it," said Caroline to the housemaid.

"I should never have thought that of madame," replied the other, quite surprised.

That evening Madame de Listomère went to a party at the Marquis de Beauséant's, where Rastignac would probably betake himself. It was Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant was in some way a connection of Monsieur de Rastignac, and the young man was not likely to miss coming. By two in the morning Madame de Listomère, who had gone there solely for the purpose of crushing Eugène by her coldness, discovered that she was waiting in vain. A brilliant man — Stendhal — has given the fantastic name of "crystallization" to the process which Madame de Listomère's thoughts went through before, during, and after this evening.

Four days later Eugène was scolding his valet.

"*Ah ça!* Joseph; I shall soon have to send you away, my lad."

"What is it, monsieur?"

"You do nothing but make mistakes. Where did you carry those letters I gave you Saturday?"

Joseph became stolid. Like a statue in some cathe-

dral porch, he stood motionless, entirely absorbed in the labors of imagination. Suddenly he smiled idiotically, and said:—

“Monsieur, one was for the Marquise de Listomère, the other was for Monsieur’s lawyer.”

“You are certain of what you say?”

Joseph was speechless. I saw plainly that I must interfere, as I happened to be again in Eugène’s apartment.

“Joseph is right,” I said.

Eugène turned and looked at me.

“I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and —”

“And,” interrupted Eugène, “one of them was *not* for Madame de Nucingen?”

“No, by all the devils, it was not. Consequently, I supposed, my dear fellow, that your heart was wandering from the rue Saint-Lazare to the rue Saint-Dominique.”

Eugène struck his forehead with the flat of his hand and began to laugh; by which Joseph perceived that the blame was not on him.

Now, there are certain morals to this tale on which young men had better reflect. *First mistake*: Eugène thought it would be amusing to make Madame de Listomère laugh at the blunder which had made her the recipient of a love-letter which was not intended for her. *Second mistake*: he did not call on Madame de

Listomère for several days after the adventure, thus allowing the thoughts of that virtuous young woman to crystallize. There were other mistakes which I will here pass over in silence, in order to give the ladies the pleasure of deducing them, *ex professo*, to those who are unable to guess them.

Eugène at last went to call upon the marquise; but, on attempting to pass into the house, the porter stopped him, saying that Madame la marquise was out. As he was getting back into his carriage the Marquis de Listomère came home.

"Come in, Eugène," he said. "My wife is at home."

Pray excuse the marquis. A husband, however good he may be, never attains perfection. As they went up the staircase Rastignac perceived at least a dozen blunders in worldly wisdom which had, unaccountably, slipped into this page of the glorious book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband ushering in Eugène she could not help blushing. The young baron saw that sudden color. If the most humble-minded man retains in the depths of his soul a certain conceit of which he never rids himself, any more than a woman ever rids herself of coquetry, who shall blame Eugène if he did say softly in his own mind: "What! that fortress, too?" So thinking, he posed in his cravat. Young men may not be grasping, but they like to get a new coin in their collection.

Monsieur de Listomère seized the "Gazette de France," which he saw on the mantelpiece, and carried it to a window, to obtain, by journalistic help, an opinion of his own on the state of France.

A woman, even a prude, is never long embarrassed, however difficult may be the position in which she finds herself; she seems always to have on hand the fig-leaf which our mother Eve bequeathed to her. Consequently, when Eugène, interpreting, in favor of his vanity, the refusal to admit him, bowed to Madame de Listomère in a tolerably intentional manner, she veiled her thoughts behind one of those feminine smiles which are more impenetrable than the words of a king.

"Are you unwell, madame? You denied yourself to visitors."

"I am well, monsieur."

"Perhaps you were going out?"

"Not at all."

"You expected some one?"

"No one."

"If my visit is indiscreet you must blame Monsieur le marquis. I had already accepted your mysterious denial, when he himself came up, and introduced me into the sanctuary."

"Monsieur de Listomère is not in my confidence on this point. It is not always prudent to put a husband in possession of certain secrets."

The firm and gentle tones in which the marquise said these words, and the imposing glance which she cast upon Rastignac made him aware that he had posed in his cravat a trifle prematurely.

"Madame, I understand you," he said, laughing. "I ought, therefore, to be doubly thankful that Monsieur le marquis met me; he affords me an opportunity to offer you excuses which might be full of danger were you not kindness itself."

The marquise looked at the young man with an air of some surprise, but she answered with dignity: —

"Monsieur, silence on your part will be the best excuse. As for me, I promise you entire forgetfulness, and the pardon which you scarcely deserve."

"Madame," said Rastignac, hastily, "pardon is not needed where there was no offence. The letter," he added, in a low voice, "which you received, and which you must have thought extremely unbecoming, was not intended for you."

The marquise could not help smiling, though she wished to seem offended.

"Why deceive?" she said, with a disdainful air, although the tones of her voice were gentle. "Now that I have duly scolded you, I am willing to laugh at a subterfuge which is not without cleverness. I know many women who would be taken in by it: 'Heavens! how he loves me!' they would say."

Here the marquise gave a forced laugh, and then added, in a tone of indulgence:—

"If we desire to continue friends let there be no more mistakes, of which it is impossible that I should be the dupe."

"Upon my honor, madame, you are so—far more than you think," replied Eugène.

"What are you talking about?" asked Monsieur de Listomère, who, for the last minute, had been listening to the conversation, the meaning of which he could not penetrate.

"Oh! nothing that would interest you," replied his wife.

Monsieur de Listomère tranquilly returned to the reading of his paper, and presently said:—

"Ah! Madame de Morteau is dead; your poor brother has, no doubt, gone to Clochegourde."

"Are you aware, monsieur," resumed the marquise, turning to Eugène, "that what you have just said is a great impertinence?"

"If I did not know the strictness of your principles," he answered, naïvely, "I should think that you wished either to give me ideas which I deny myself, or else to tear a secret from me. But perhaps you are only amusing yourself with me."

The marquise smiled. That smile annoyed Eugène.

"Madame," he said, "can you still believe in an

offence I have not committed? I earnestly hope that chance may not enable you to discover the name of the person who ought to have read that letter."

"What! can it be *still* Madame de Nucingen?" cried Madame de Listomère, more eager to penetrate that secret than to revenge herself for the impertinence of the young man's speeches.

Eugène colored. A man must be more than twenty-five years of age not to blush at being taxed with a fidelity that women laugh at — in order, perhaps, not to show that they envy it. However, he replied with tolerable self-possession: —

"Why not, madame?"

Such are the blunders we all make at twenty-five.

This speech caused a violent commotion in Madame de Listomère's bosom; but Rastignac did not yet know how to analyze a woman's face by a rapid or sidelong glance. The lips of the marquise paled, but that was all. She rang the bell for wood, and so constrained Rastignac to rise and take his leave.

"If that be so," said the marquise, stopping Eugène with a cold and rigid manner, "you will find it difficult to explain, monsieur, why your pen should, by accident, write my name. A name, written on a letter, is not a friend's opera-hat, which you might have taken, carelessly, on leaving a ball."

Eugène, discomfited, looked at the marquise with

an air that was both stupid and conceited. He felt that he was becoming ridiculous; and after stammering a few juvenile phrases he left the room.

A few days later the marquise acquired undeniable proofs that Eugene had told the truth. For the last fortnight she has not been seen in society.

The marquise tells all those who ask him the reason of this seclusion:—

"My wife has an inflammation of the stomach."

But I, her physician, who am now attending her, know it is really nothing more than a slight nervous attack, which she is making the most of in order to

~~stay quietly at home.~~

THE MESSAGE.





THE MESSAGE.

TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DAMASO PARETO.

I HAVE always desired to relate a true and simple incident, the telling of which once made a young man and his mistress tremble with fear and take refuge in each other's hearts, like two children who cling together on meeting a snake at the edge of woods.

At the risk of diminishing the interest of my narrative or of passing for a conceited fool, I begin by telling you the object of my present writing. I myself have played a part in this almost commonplace drama. If that drama does not interest you, it will be my fault as well as that of this absolutely true tale. Many true tales are deadly dull and wearisome. Half the real talent of a writer consists in choosing among true facts those that may become poetic.

In 1819 I had occasion to go from Paris to Moulins. The state of my purse obliged me to travel in the impériale of the diligence. Englishmen, you know, regard the seats in that aerial section of the vehicle as

the best. For the first few leagues of the way I found excellent reasons to justify this opinion of our neighbors. A young man, who seemed to me better off than I was myself, got up, by choice, into the same elevated position. He replied to my remarks by smiles that were perfectly inoffensive. Soon a certain conformity of age and thought, our mutual liking for the free air and the rich aspect of the scenery, which gradually unfolded as the lumbering vehicle rolled heavily along, and also some magnetic attraction impossible to explain, generated between us that sort of momentary intimacy to which travellers are apt to lend themselves; with all the more readiness, perhaps, because this ephemeral sentiment will soon cease, and binds us to nothing in the future.

We had not done thirty miles before we were talking of women and of love. With all the oratorical precautions required under such circumstances, it soon became, naturally, a question of our respective mistresses. Young, both of us, we were still at that period of life which worships women "of a certain age;" that is to say, women between thirty-five and forty. Oh! a poet who had listened to us from Montargis to I know not what relay might have gathered many an ardent expression, many a glowing portrait and tender confidence! Our modest fears, our silent ejaculations, our blushing faces gave an eloquence to that scene, the

artless charm of which I have never been able to recapture. Well, we must all stay young to understand youth! So, being of equal age, we understood each other marvellously well on all the more essential points of passion.

In the first place, we began by laying down the law in fact and principle that there was nothing so silly in all the world as a certificate of birth; that many women of forty were younger than certain other women of twenty; and, finally, that no woman was older than the age she seemed to be. This system putting no bounds to love, we swam, in good faith, through a limitless ocean. And at last, having made our mistresses young, charming, devoted, of high rank, full of exquisite taste, witty and refined; after bestowing upon them pretty feet, a satiny and softly perfumed skin, we acknowledged to each other, he, that Madame Such a one was thirty-eight years old, and I, that I adored a quadrigenarian.

Thereupon, being delivered, both of us, from a sort of vague fear, we resumed our confidences, all the more intimate for this brotherhood in love. It was now a strife as to which of the two had shown the greater depth of feeling. One had travelled five hundred miles to see the lady of his love for a single hour. The other had risked being taken for a wolf and shot in a park while rambling nocturnally beneath her

windows. In short, all our follies! Ah! if there be pleasure in recalling past dangers, what infinite delight there is in remembering vanished joys! Is it not twice enjoying them? Our perils, our great and our little happinesses, we told them all; even our jokes. My friend's countess had smoked a cigar to please him. Mine made me my chocolate and never passed a day without writing to me or seeing me; his had invited him to stay three days in her house, whither he was now going; mine had done even better, or worse, as you may take it. Our husbands adored our countesses, — they were slaves to the charm possessed by loving women; more foolish than they need be, they caused us only just anxiety enough to increase our joys. Oh! how the breeze bore rapidly away our words and our happy laughter!

When we reached Pouilly I examined, most attentively, the person of my new friend. Certainly I could well believe that he might be seriously loved. Picture to yourself a young man of middle height, extremely well-proportioned, with a happy face, which was full of expression. His hair was black and his eyes blue; his lips were faintly red; his teeth white and even; a becoming pallor still lingered on his delicate features, and slight brown circles were round his eyes as though he were lately convalescent. Add to all this that his hands were white, well-modelled, and kept like those

of a pretty woman; that he seemed well-educated and was very witty, — and you will have no difficulty in granting that my companion's love would do honor to a countess. More than one young girl might have coveted such a youth for a husband. He was a viscount, and possessed in his own right fifteen thousand francs a year, to say nothing of expectations.

Three miles beyond Pouilly the diligence was overturned. My unfortunate comrade thought best, for his safety, to jump into a fresh-ploughed field rather than to cling tightly to the seat, as I did, and go over with the vehicle. Either he measured his distance ill, or he slipped; I do not know how the accident occurred, but the coach fell over upon him and crushed him. We carried him to the house of a peasant. Amid the groans which his dreadful sufferings forced from him, he was able to bequeath to me a duty to which the last wishes of a dying man gave a sacred character.

While enduring mortal agony, the poor fellow fretted, with the simple candor of his age, for the shock his mistress would feel if she read of his death, unexpectedly, in a newspaper. He begged me to go myself and announce it to her. Then he told me to find a key that was hung around his neck by a ribbon. I found it half imbedded in his flesh. The dying man made not the slightest moan as I drew it, as gently as possible, from the wound it had made. No sooner

had he given me certain necessary instructions to obtain at his home in La Charité-sur-Loire the letters of his lady, which he conjured me to return, than he lost his speech in the middle of a sentence. His last gesture made me understand that the fatal key would be a sign to his mother of my mission. Grieved not to be able to say a word of thanks, — for he never doubted my will to serve him, — he looked at me for a moment with a supplicating eye, and bade me farewell by a motion of his eyelids as he dropped his head and died.

His death was the only fatal result of the overturn; and even that, as the conductor said to me, was partly his own fault.

At La Charité I fulfilled the verbal will of the poor traveller. His mother was absent, which was, I may say, a comfort to me; although I had to bear the grief of an old servant-woman, who tottered when I told her of the death of her young master, and dropped half dead upon a chair on seeing the key still stained with his blood. But, as my thoughts were filled with a greater suffering, — that of the woman from whom fate had snatched the last love of youth, — I left the old housekeeper as soon as I had found the precious correspondence, which was carefully sealed up by my friend of a day.

The château where his countess lived was twenty miles from my own destination, — Moulins; but in

order to reach it I was obliged to do most of the distance across country. It was, therefore, a difficult message for me, in my then condition, to deliver. Through a combination of circumstances unnecessary to explain, I had only enough money to reach Moulins. Nevertheless, with the ardor of youth, I determined to make the trip on foot, and do it rapidly enough to prevent the ill news which travels apace from forestalling me. I inquired the shortest way, and followed the wood-paths of the Bourbonnais, bearing, as it were, a corpse upon my shoulders.

The nearer I came to the château de Montpersan, the more alarmed I felt by the nature of the pilgrimage I had undertaken. My imagination invented a thousand romantic incidents. I fancied the situations in which I might encounter Madame de Montpersan, or, rather, to use the poetic name the young traveller had given her, the Juliet of this romance. I invented admirable answers to the questions which would probably be made to me. At every turn of the wood-path, in the lanes, and between the hedges, I rehearsed the scene of Sosie and his lantern, to which he tells the story of the battle. To the shame of my soul be it said that I thought only, at first, of my own behavior, my intelligence, and the cleverness I intended to display. But when I neared the château a reflection crossed my mind like the thunderclap that seems to rend and furrow the

lowering gray clouds. What fearful news I was about to give to a woman whose heart was full, at the very moment, of my young friend and the hope, from hour to hour, of seeing him! It was, indeed, a cruel charity to be the messenger of death!

I hastened my steps through the muddy, slimy paths of the Bourbonnaise. Presently I came to a great avenue of chestnuts, at the farther end of which the huge pile of the château de Montpersan rose against the sky like a dark brown cloud with light and fantastic edges.

When I reached the gate of the château I found it open. This unexpected circumstance destroyed my plans and my suppositions. Nevertheless, I entered boldly, and was immediately followed by two dogs, barking like true country watch-dogs. At the noise, a stout servant-woman ran out, and when I told her that I wished to speak to Madame la comtesse, she pointed with her hand to the clumps of trees of an English park which surrounded the house, and answered: —

“Madame is over there.”

“Thank you!” I replied sarcastically. *Over there* might send me wandering for two hours through the park.

A pretty little girl with curly hair, a pink sash, white frock and pleated pelerine, here ran up, having

heard my question and the woman's answer. After looking at me for a moment she disappeared, and I heard her calling out, in a thin, childish voice: —

“Mamma! here's a gentleman who wants to see you.”

I followed first the voice, and then the fluttering and bounding of the white pelerine which, like a will o' the wisp, showed me the way the child had taken.

I must tell all. At the last clump of bushes in the avenue, I had pulled up my shirt-collar, brushed my old hat and my trousers with the flaps of my coat, the coat with its own sleeves, and the sleeves with each other. Then I had carefully buttoned up the coat in order to show the part beneath the lappels, less shabby than the rest; and, as a final touch, I pulled my trousers well down over my boots, artistically rubbed and cleaned on the grass. Thanks to this Gascon toilet, I hoped not to be taken for a tramp just released from the workhouse; but when I think, to-day, of this episode of my youth, I laugh heartily to myself.

Suddenly, just as I had somewhat composed my demeanor, at the turn of a grassy path, in the midst of flowers aglow in the warmth of the sun, I saw “Juliet” and her husband. The pretty little girl was holding her mother by the hand, and it was easy to see that the countess had hastened her steps on hear-

ing the ambiguous call of her child. Surprised at seeing a stranger (who bowed to her in a sufficiently awkward manner), she stopped and gave me a polite but frigid salutation, which showed me that I had already deceived her hopes. I tried to think, but in vain, of a single one of the many fine phrases so laboriously prepared. During this moment of mutual hesitation the husband came up to us. Myriads of thoughts passed through my brain. By way of introduction I said a few meaningless words, and asked if the two persons before me were really the Comte and Comtesse de Montpersan.

These commonplaces enabled me to judge at a glance, and analyze with a perspicacity rare at my age the two persons whose tranquillity I was about to trouble so violently. The husband seemed to me a type of those country gentlemen who are really the best ornament of the provinces. He wore stout shoes with thick soles. I place those articles first because they struck my eye more vividly than his faded black coat, his much-worn trousers, his limp cravat, and the dog's-eared collar of his shirt. There was something of the magistrate about the man, more of a puisne judge, all the dignity of the mayor of a district, and the sourness of an eligible candidate for the Chamber, periodically rejected since 1816; also a singular mixture of a countryman's good sense with silliness; no

manners, but the pride of wealth; much submission to his wife, though believing himself her master; readiness to make a fuss about little things while paying no attention to important ones: for the rest, a withered face, much wrinkled and tanned; thin gray hair, long and flattened down; and there you have the man!

But the countess! Ah! what a keen and total contrast she presented to him. She was a little woman, with a graceful, slender figure, so dainty and delicate that you might have feared to crush her bones in touching her. She wore a white muslin gown; on her head a charming little cap with pink ribbons, a pink sash, a lace fichu delightfully filled by the beautiful shoulders and rounded outlines of her shape. Her eyes were lively, black, and expressive, her movements gentle, her foot charming. An old man of gallantry would have said she was only thirty, so much of youth remained on her brow and in the various delicate details of her head. As for character, she seemed to me to combine the qualities of the Comtesse de Lignolles and the Marquise de B——, two types of women always fresh in the memory of every young man who has once read Louvet's novel.

I seemed suddenly to penetrate into the secrets of this household, and as suddenly I came to a diplomatic resolution, quite worthy of an old ambassador. It was, perhaps, the only time in my life I ever showed

tact, or fully understood in what consists the adroitness of courtiers and men of the world.

Since those days of heedless youth, I have had too many battles upon my hands to distil, as it were, the lesser actions of life and do nothing more than practise the scales of etiquette, — a process which dries the emotions of generous hearts.

“Monsieur le comte, I am anxious to speak to you in private,” I said, with a mysterious air, making a few steps backward.

He followed me. Juliet left us alone, — walking carelessly away like a woman certain of knowing her husband’s secrets whenever she asked for them. I briefly related to the count the death of my travelling companion. The effect produced upon him showed me plainly that he was greatly attached to the young man, and this discovery emboldened me to answer as follows, in the dialogue which ensued.

“My wife will be in despair,” he cried, “and I shall be obliged to take every precaution when informing her of this terrible event.”

“Monsieur, in addressing myself to you in the first place,” I said, “I fulfilled a duty. I did not wish to deliver a message given to me by an unknown man for Madame la comtesse without informing you of it. But the poor fellow confided to me a species of honorable trust, a secret which I have no right to speak

of except as he bade me. From the high opinion which he gave me of your character, I think you will not object to my accomplishing his last wishes. Madame la comtesse will, of course, be at liberty to break the silence which is imposed upon me.

Hearing this praise of himself, the worthy gentleman nodded his head complacently. He answered me with a somewhat involved compliment, and left me free to proceed as I wished. We then returned upon our steps. The first bell rang for dinner at this moment, and he invited me to share the meal.

When Juliet joined us and saw that we were grave and silent, she examined us both furtively. Greatly surprised when her husband made a frivolous excuse to leave us together, she stopped short and flung me one of those glances which none but women have the gift to fling. In that look was all the curiosity of the mistress of a household who receives a stranger falling from the clouds; all the questions which my apparel, youth and physiognomy (in singular contrast) awakened; all the disdain of an adored woman in whose eyes every man save one is nothing; there were, besides, in that one glance, involuntary fears and the annoyance of receiving an unexpected guest at the moment when she was expecting another and a dear one. I felt and comprehended that mute eloquence, and I answered it with a sad smile, full of pity and

compassion. I gazed at her for an instant, as she stood, in the glow of her beauty, in the narrow path bordered with flowers on that serene and sunny day. Seeing this delightful picture I could not check a sigh.

"Alas! madame, I have made a painful journey, undertaken — for you alone."

"Monsieur!" she said.

"I come," I added, "in the name of him who called you 'Juliet.'" She turned pale. "You will not see him to-day."

"Is he ill?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Yes," I answered. "But, I entreat you, be calm. I am charged by him to confide to you certain secret things which concern you; pray believe that no messenger was ever more discreet or more devoted."

"What is the matter?"

"Perhaps he no longer loves you."

"Oh! that is impossible!" she cried, with a smile that was nothing less than frank.

Suddenly a shudder came over her; she cast a wild and rapid glance upon me, and said:—

"Is he living?"

Good God! what a terrible question. I was too young at the time to bear the tone of it; I could not answer, but I looked at her helplessly.

"Monsieur! monsieur! give me an answer," she cried.

"Yes, madame."

"Is it true? Tell me the truth; I can bear it. Tell me. Any suffering is less dreadful than uncertainty."

I answered with tears, drawn from me by the tones which accompanied these words.

She leaned against a tree, giving a feeble cry.

"Madame," I said, "here is your husband."

"Have I a husband?"

With those words she fled away and disappeared.

"Come," said the count, "dinner is getting cold. Come, monsieur."

I followed the master of the house into the dining-room where I found a table served with all the luxury to which Parisian dinners have accustomed us. There were five places set, — two for the master and mistress; one for the little girl; mine, which should have been *his*; the fifth was that of a canon of Saint-Denis, who, after he had said grace, inquired: —

"Where is our dear countess?"

"Oh! she is coming," replied the count, proceeding to serve the soup, after which he helped himself to an ample plateful which he ate extraordinarily fast.

"Oh! my dear nephew," cried the canon, "if your wife were here you would be more careful."

"Papa will be ill," said the little girl, maliciously.

After this singular gastronomic episode, and while the count was hastily carving a piece of venison a

waiting-maid entered the room and said, hurriedly: "Monsieur, we cannot find madame!"

At these words I rose abruptly, fearing some disaster; and my face expressed my fears so plainly that the old canon rose too, and followed me into the garden. The count came, out of decency, as it seemed, to the door, calling after us:—

"Come back! come back! you need not feel uneasy."

But he did not accompany us. The canon, the waiting-maid, and I hurried through paths and lawns, calling, listening, and all the more uneasy because I had told my companions of the death of the young viscount. As we hurried along I related the circumstances of that fatal event, and I saw that the waiting-maid was deeply attached to her mistress; she entered more fully than the canon into the reasons of my terror.

We went from place to place without finding either the countess or any trace of her passage; but at last, passing the side of a wall, I fancied I heard stifled moans issuing from a species of barn. I entered it; and there we discovered Juliet. Led by an instinct of despair, she had buried herself in the hay, covering her head to dull the sound of her terrible cries,—the sobs and tears of childhood, but more piercing, more plaintive. The world had nothing more to offer her.

The maid lifted her mistress, who allowed herself to be handled with the limp indifference of a dying animal. The woman knew nothing else to say than: "Come, madame, come —"

The old canon asked again and again: —

"Are you ill, my niece? What is the matter?"

Aided by the maid I carried Juliet to her bedroom, where I laid her on a sofa, bidding the woman watch her, and say to others that her head ached. Then the canon and I went back to the dining-room. It was some time, of course, since we had left the count, and I had not thought of him until we reached the peristyle, when a recollection of his indifference surprised me. But I was much more astonished when, on reaching the dining-room, I found him philosophically seated at the table. He had eaten almost the whole dinner, to the great amusement of the little girl, who smiled to see her father in flagrant disobedience to the countess's commands.

This singular behavior of the count was explained to me by a slight altercation which suddenly arose between the canon and himself. The count, it appeared, was under a strict diet ordered by the doctors to cure him of some serious illness, the name of which escapes me; but, impelled by that ferocious gluttony not uncommon in convalescents, the appetite of the animal within him had got the better of the sensibilities

of the man. I thus, almost at the same moment, saw nature in all her truth, — under two entirely different aspects, so different that an element of the comic appeared in the very centre of this terrible grief.

The evening was sad. I was much fatigued. The canon talked of his niece and her tears. The husband digested in silence, having contented himself with the vague explanation which the maid gave him of her mistress's illness. We went to bed early. As I passed the door of the countess's bedroom under guidance of a valet, I stopped, and timidly asked news of her health. Hearing my voice, she made me come in, and tried to speak to me; but finding herself unable to articulate, she only bowed her head, and I retired.

In spite of the cruel emotions which I had shared all day with the sincerity and good faith of a young man, I fell soundly asleep, overcome with the fatigue of my forced march. At a late hour of the night I was awakened by a sharp rattle produced by the rings of my bed-curtains being violently pulled along their iron bar. I then saw the countess at the foot of my bed. Her face was in the full light of a lamp which she had placed upon a table.

"Is it really true, monsieur?" she said. "I do not know if I can live under the awful blow that I have just received; but at this moment I am calm, and I wish to know all."

"Calm!" I thought; "what calmness!"

The frightful pallor of her face contrasting with the brown of her hair, the guttural tones of her voice, and the ravages which a few short hours had made in her changed features stupefied me. She had withered already, like a leaf that is robbed of its last autumnal tints. Her red and swollen eyes, denuded of all their beauty, reflected only a bitter, hopeless grief; gray clouds alone were there, where a few short hours before the sun was sparkling.

I told her simply (not dwelling on certain circumstances too painful for her) the sudden and rapid event which had robbed her of her friend. She did not weep; she listened with avidity, her head bending toward me. Seizing a moment when she seemed to have wholly opened her soul to suffering, and to wish to plunge into her grief with the burning ardor of the first fever of despair, I spoke to her of the fears for her which had troubled the dying man; and I told her how and why it was that he had charged me to bring to her the fatal message. Then her eyes dried from the heat of the lurid fire which now escaped from the deepest regions of her soul. She grew still paler. When I offered her the letters, which I drew from beneath my pillow, she took them mechanically; then she shuddered violently, and said, in a hollow voice: —

"I burned all his! I have nothing of him! nothing! nothing!"

She struck her forehead forcibly.

"Madame!" I said; she looked at me with a movement that was almost convulsive. "I cut from his head," I continued, "a lock of his hair, and here it is."

I gave her that one incorruptible fragment of him she had loved and lost. Ah! if you had felt, as I did, the burning tears that fell upon my hands, you would know what gratitude is when it stands beside a benefit! She grasped my hands, and in a stifled voice, and with a look brilliant with fever, a look in which her slender joy shone out amid her sufferings, she said:

"You love! you love! Be happy! may you never lose her who is dear to you —"

She said no more, but fled with her treasure.

The next day this nocturnal scene, mingling with my dreams, seemed to me a fiction. In order to convince myself of its painful truth, I felt beneath my pillow for the letters, and found them gone.

It is unnecessary to relate the events of that day. I was several hours alone with the Juliet my poor companion had so praised to me. The slightest words, the gestures, the actions of that beloved woman proved to me the nobility of soul, the delicacy of feeling which made her one of those dear creatures of love and of devotion so rarely sent upon this earth.

That evening Monsieur de Montpersan drove me

himself to Moulins. When we arrived there, he said, with a sort of embarrassment: —

“Monsieur, if I am not abusing your kindness, and taking a liberty with a stranger to whom we are already under obligations, would you have the kindness to remit in Paris, to Monsieur — (I forget the name), rue du Sentier, a sum of money which I owe him, and which he has requested me to send him promptly?”

“Willingly,” I said.

In the innocence of my heart I took the roll of twenty-five louis which the count handed to me. It enabled me to pay my way back to Paris; and the next morning I carried the sum thus lent to me to the correspondent and so-called creditor of Montpersan.

It was not till I had actually taken the money to the person indicated that I comprehended the delicate cleverness with which Juliet had befriended me. The manner in which that gold was lent, the silence preserved about my poverty, so unmistakable to the eye, did they not reveal the *genius* of a loving woman?

How delightful to tell this simple story to a woman who presses closer to you in terror, whispering: “Ah! dear, don’t die and leave me!”





P A Z.

(LA FAUSSE MAÎTRESSE.)







P A Z.

DEDICATED TO THE COMTESSE CLARA MAFFEL

I.

IN September, 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only daughter of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Comte Adam Mitgislav Laginski, a young Polish exile.

We ask permission to write these Polish names as they are pronounced, to spare our readers the aspect of the fortifications of consonants by which the Slave language protects its vowels, — probably not to lose them, considering how few there are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had squandered nearly the whole of a princely fortune, which he obtained originally through his marriage with a Demoiselle de Ronquerolles. Therefore, on her mother's side Clementine du Rouvre had the Marquis de Ronquerolles for uncle, and Madame de Sérizy for aunt. On her father's side she had another



uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, a younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had become very rich by speculating in lands and houses. The Marquis de Ronquerolles had the misfortune to lose both his children at the time of the cholera, and the only son of Madame de Sérizy, a young soldier of great promise, perished in Africa in the affair of the Makta. In these days rich families stand between the danger of impoverishing their children if they have too many, or of extinguishing their names if they have too few, — a singular result of the Code which Napoleon never thought of. By a curious turn of fortune Clémentine became, in spite of her father having squandered his substance on Florine (one of the most charming actresses in Paris), a great heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, a clever diplomatist under the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed, in order to save their fortunes from the dissipations of the marquis, to settle them on their niece, to whom, moreover, they each pledged themselves to pay ten thousand francs a year from the day of her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Polish count, though an exile, was no expense to the French government. Comte Adam Laginski belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families in Poland, which was allied to many of the princely houses of Ger-

many, — Sapiéha, Radziwill, Mniszech, Rzewuski, Czartoryski, Leczinski, Lubomirski, and all the other great Sarmatian *skis*. But heraldic knowledge is not the most distinguishing feature of the French nation under Louis-Philippe, and Polish nobility was no great recommendation to the bourgeoisie who were lording it in those days. Besides, when Adam first made his appearance, in 1833, on the boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati, and at the Jockey-Club, he was leading the life of a young man who, having lost his political prospects, was taking his pleasure in Parisian dissipation. At first he was thought to be a student.

The Polish nationality had at this period fallen as low in French estimation, thanks to a shameful governmental reaction, as the republicans had sought to raise it. The singular struggle of the Movement against Resistance (two words which will be inexplicable thirty years hence) made sport of what ought to have been truly respected,—the name of a conquered nation to whom the French had offered hospitality, for whom fêtes had been given (with songs and dances by subscription), above all, a nation which in the Napoleonic struggle between France and Europe had given us six thousand men, and what men!

Do not infer from this that either side is taken here; either that of the Emperor Nicholas against Poland, or that of Poland against the Emperor. It would be

a foolish thing to slip political discussions into tales that are intended to amuse or interest. Besides, Russia and Poland were both right, — one to wish the unity of its empire, the other to desire its liberty. Let us say in passing that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of her morals instead of fighting her with weapons; she should have imitated China which, in the end, Chinesed the Tartars, and will, it is to be hoped, Chinese the English. Poland ought to have Polonized Russia. Poniatowski tried to do so in the least favorable portion of the empire; but as a king he was little understood, — because, possibly, he did not fully understand himself.

But how could the Parisians avoid disliking an unfortunate people who were the cause of that shameful falsehood enacted during the famous review at which all Paris declared its will to succor Poland? The Poles were held up to them as the allies of the republican party, and they never once remembered that Poland was a republic of aristocrats. From that day forth the bourgeoisie treated with base contempt the exiles of the nation it had worshipped a few days earlier. The wind of a riot is always enough to veer the Parisians from north to south under any régime. It is necessary to remember these sudden fluctuations of feeling in order to understand why it was that in 1835 the word “Pole” conveyed a derisive meaning to a

people who consider themselves the wittiest and most courteous nation on earth, and their city of Paris the focus of enlightenment, with the sceptre of arts and literature within its grasp.

There, are, alas! two sorts of Polish exiles, — the republican Poles, sons of Lelewel, and the noble Poles, at the head of whom is Prince Adam Czartoryski. The two classes are like fire and water; but why complain of that? Such divisions are always to be found among exiles, no matter of what nation they may be, or in what countries they take refuge. They carry their countries and their hatreds with them. Two French priests, who had emigrated to Brussels during the Revolution, showed the utmost horror of each other, and when one of them was asked why, he replied with a glance at his companion in misery: "Why? because he's a Jansenist!" Dante would gladly have stabbed a Guelf had he met him in exile. This explains the virulent attacks of the French against the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski, and the dislike shown to the better class of Polish exiles by the shop-keeping Cæsars and the licensed Alexanders of Paris.

In 1834, therefore, Adam Mitgislav Laginski was something of a butt for Parisian pleasantry.

"He is rather nice, though he is a Pole," said Rastignac.

"All these Poles pretend to be great lords," said

Maxime de Trailles, "but this one does pay his gambling debts, and I begin to think he must have property."

Without wishing to offend these banished men, it may be allowable to remark that the light-hearted, careless inconsistency of the Sarmatian character does justify in some degree the satire of the Parisians, who, by the bye, would behave in like circumstances exactly as the Poles do. The French aristocracy, so nobly succored during the Revolution by the Polish lords, certainly did not return the kindness in 1832. Let us have the melancholy courage to admit this, and to say that the faubourg Saint-Germain is still the debtor of Poland.

Was Comte Adam rich, or was he poor, or was he an adventurer? This problem was long unsolved. The diplomatic salons, faithful to instructions, imitated the silence of the Emperor Nicholas, who held that all Polish exiles were virtually dead and buried. The court of the Tuileries, and all who took their cue from it, gave striking proof of the political quality which was then dignified by the name of sagacity. They turned their backs on a Russian prince with whom they had all been on intimate terms during the Emigration, merely because it was said that the Emperor Nicholas gave him the cold shoulder. Between the caution of the court and the prudence of the

diplomates, the Polish exiles of distinction lived in Paris in the Biblical solitude of *super flumina Babylonis*, or else they haunted a few salons which were the neutral ground of all opinions. In a city of pleasure, like Paris, where amusements abound on all sides, the heedless gayety of a Pole finds twice as many encouragements as it needs to a life of dissipation.

It must be said, however, that Adam had two points against him, — his appearance, and his mental equipment. There are two species of Pole, as there are two species of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not very handsome she is horribly ugly. Comte Adam belonged in the second category of human beings. His small face, rather sharp in expression, looked as if it had been pressed in a vise. His short nose, and fair hair, and reddish beard and moustache made him look all the more like a goat because he was small and thin, and his tarnished yellow eyes caught you with that oblique look which Virgil celebrates. How came he, in spite of such obvious disadvantages, to possess really exquisite manners and a distinguished air? The problem is solved partly by the care and elegance of his dress, and partly by the training given him by his mother, a Radziwill. His courage amounted to daring, but his mind was not more than was needed for the ephemeral talk and pleasantry of Parisian conversation. And yet it would have been difficult to find among the young

men of fashion in Paris a single one who was his superior. Young men talk a great deal too much in these days of horses, money, taxes, deputies; French *conversation* is no longer what it was. Brilliancy of mind needs leisure and certain social inequalities to bring it out. There is, probably, more real conversation in Vienna or St. Petersburg than in Paris. Equals do not need to employ delicacy or shrewdness in speech; they blurt out things as they are. Consequently the dandies of Paris did not discover the great *seigneur* in the rather heedless young fellow who, in their talks, would flit from one subject to another, all the more intent upon amusement because he had just escaped from a great peril, and, finding himself in a city where his family was unknown, felt at liberty to lead a loose life without the risk of disgracing his name.

But one fine day in 1834 Adam suddenly bought a house in the rue de la Pépinière. Six months later his style of living was second to none in Paris. About the time when he thus began to take himself seriously he had seen Clémentine du Rouvre at the Opera and had fallen in love with her. A year later the marriage took place. The salon of Madame d'Espard was the first to sound his praises. Mothers of daughters then learned too late that as far back as the year 900 the family of the Laginski was among the most illustrious of the North. By an act of prudence which

was very unPolish, the mother of the young count had mortgaged her entire property on the breaking out of the insurrection for an immense sum lent by two Jewish bankers in Paris. Comte Adam was now in possession of eighty thousand francs a year. When this was discovered society ceased to be surprised at the imprudence which had been laid to the charge of Madame de Sérizy, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to the foolish passion of their niece. People jumped, as usual, from one extreme of judgment to the other.

During the winter of 1836 Comte Adam was the fashion, and Clémentine Laginska one of the queens of Paris. Madame Laginska is now a member of that charming circle of young women represented by Mesdames de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the flowers of our present Paris, who live at such immeasurable distance from the parvenus, the vulgarians, and the speculators of the new régime.

This preamble is necessary to show the sphere in which was done one of those noble actions, less rare than the calumniators of our time admit, — actions which, like pearls, the fruit of pain and suffering, are hidden within rough shells, lost in the gulf, the sea, the tossing waves of what we call society, the century, Paris, London, St. Petersburg, — or what you will.

If the axiom that architecture is the expression of manners and morals was ever proved, it was certainly after the insurrection of 1830, during the present reign of the house of Orléans. As all the old fortunes are diminishing in France, the majestic mansions of our ancestors are constantly being demolished and replaced by species of phalansteries, in which the peers of July occupy the third floor above some newly enriched empires on the lower floors. A mixture of styles is confusedly employed. As there is no longer a real court or nobility to give the tone, there is no harmony in the production of art. Never, on the other hand, has architecture discovered so many economical ways of imitating the real and the solid, or displayed more resources, more talent, in distributing them. Propose to an architect to build upon the garden at the back of an old mansion, and he will run you up a little Louvre overloaded with ornament. He will manage to get in a courtyard, stables, and if you care for it, a garden. Inside the house he will accumulate a quantity of little rooms and passages. He is so clever in deceiving the eye that you think you will have plenty of space; but it is only a nest of small rooms, after all, in which a ducal family has to turn itself about in the space that its own bakehouse formerly occupied.

The hôtel of the Comtesse Laginska, rue de la Pepinière, is one of these creations, and stands be-

tween court and garden. On the right, in the court, are the kitchens and offices; to the left the coach-house and stables. The porter's lodge is between two charming *portes-cochères*. The chief luxury of the house is a delightful greenhouse contrived at the end of a *boudoir* on the ground-floor which opens upon an admirable suite of reception rooms. An English philanthropist had built this architectural bijou, designed the garden, added the greenhouse, polished the doors, bricked the courtyard, painted the window-frames green, and realized, in short, a dream which resembled (proportions excepted) George the Fourth's Pavilion at Brighton. The inventive and industrious Parisian workman had moulded the doors and window-frames; the ceilings were imitated from the middle-ages or those of a Venetian palace; marble veneering abounded on the outer walls. Steinbock and François Souchet had designed the mantel-pieces and the panels above the doors; Schinner had painted the ceilings in his masterly manner. The beauties of the staircase, white as a woman's arm, defied those of the *hôtel Rothschild*. On account of the riots and the unsettled times, the cost of this folly was only about eleven hundred thousand francs, — to an Englishman a mere nothing. All this luxury, called princely by persons who do not know what real princes are, was built in the garden of the house of a purveyor made a

Cræsus by the Revolution, who had escaped to Brussels and died there after going into bankruptcy. The Englishman died in Paris, of Paris; for to many persons Paris is a disease, — sometimes several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a horror of the little nabob establishment, and ordered it to be sold. Comte Adam bought it at a bargain; and how he came to do so shall presently be made known, for bargains were not at all in his line as a *grand seigneur*.

Behind the house lay the verdant velvet of an English lawn shaded at the lower end by a clump of exotic trees, in the midst of which stood a Chinese pagoda with soundless belfries and motionless golden eggs. The greenhouse concealed the garden wall on the northern side, the opposite wall was covered with climbing plants trained upon poles painted green and connected with crossway trellises. This lawn, this world of flowers, the gravelled paths, the simulated forest, the verdant palisades, were contained within the space of five and twenty square rods, which are worth to-day four hundred thousand francs, — the value of an actual forest. Here, in this solitude in the middle of Paris, the birds sang, thrushes, nightingales, warblers, bulfinches, and sparrows. The greenhouse was like an immense jardinière, filling the air with perfume in winter as in summer. The means by which its

atmosphere was made to order, torrid as in China or temperate as in Italy, were cleverly concealed. Pipes in which hot water circulated, or steam, were either hidden under ground or festooned with plants overhead. The boudoir was a large room. The miracle of the modern Parisian fairy named Architecture is to get all these many and great things out of a limited bit of ground.

The boudoir of the young countess was arranged to suit the taste of the artist to whom Comte Adam entrusted the decoration of the house. It is too full of pretty nothings to be a place for repose; one scarce knows where to sit down among carved Chinese work-tables with their myriads of fantastic figures inlaid in ivory, cups of yellow topaz mounted on filagree, mosaics which inspire theft, Dutch pictures in the style which Schinner has adopted, angels such as Steinbock conceived but often could not execute, statuettes modelled by genius pursued by creditors (the real explanation of the Arabian myth), superb sketches by our best artists, lids of chests made into panels alternating with fluted draperies of Indian silk, portières hanging from rods of old oak in tapestried masses on which the figures of some hunting scene are swarming, pieces of furniture worthy to have belonged to Madame de Pompadour, Persian rugs, et cetera. For a last graceful touch, all these elegant things were subdued by the half-light

which filtered through embroidered curtains and added to their charm. On a table between the windows, among various curiosities, lay a whip, the handle designed by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, which proved that the countess rode on horseback.

Such is a lady's boudoir in 1837, — an exhibition of the contents of many shops, which amuse the eye, as if ennui were the one thing to be dreaded by the social world of the liveliest and most stirring capital in Europe. Why is there nothing of an inner life? nothing which leads to revery, nothing reposeful? Why indeed? Because no one in our day is sure of the future; we are living our lives like prodigal annuitants.

One morning Clémentine appeared to be thinking of something. She was lying at full length on one of those marvellous couches from which it is almost impossible to rise, the upholsterer having invented them for lovers of the *far niente* and its attendant joys of laziness to sink into. The doors of the greenhouse were open, letting the odors of vegetation and the perfume of the tropics pervade the room. The young wife was looking at her husband who was smoking a narghile, the only form of pipe she would have suffered in that room. The portières, held back by cords, gave a vista through two elegant salons, one white and gold, comparable only to that of the hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other in the style of the Renais-

sance. The dining-room, which had no rival in Paris except that of the Baron de Nucingen, was at the end of a short gallery decorated in the manner of the middle-ages. This gallery opened on the side of the courtyard upon a large antechamber, through which could be seen the beauties of the staircase.

The count and countess had just finished breakfast; the sky was a sheet of azure without a cloud, April was nearly over. They had been married two years, and Clémentine had just discovered for the first time that there was something resembling a secret or a mystery in her household. The Pole, let us say it to his honor, is usually helpless before a woman; he is so full of tenderness for her that in Poland he becomes her inferior, though Polish women make admirable wives. Now a Pole is still more easily vanquished by a Parisian woman. Consequently Comte Adam, pressed by questions, did not even attempt the innocent roguery of selling the suspected secret. It is always wise with a woman to get some good out of a mystery; she will like you the better for it, as a swindler respects an honest man the more when he finds he cannot swindle him. Brave in heart but not in speech, Comte Adam merely stipulated that he should not be compelled to answer till he had finished his narghile.

“If any difficulty occurred when we were travelling,”

said Clémentine, "you always dismissed it by saying, 'Paz will settle that.' You never wrote to any one but Paz. When we returned here everybody kept saying, 'the captain, the captain.' If I want the carriage — 'the captain.' Is there a bill to pay — 'the captain.' If my horse is not properly bitted, they must speak to Captain Paz. In short, it is like a game of dominoes — Paz is everywhere. I hear of nothing but Paz, but I never see Paz. Who and what is Paz? Why don't you bring forth your Paz?"

"Is n't everything going on right?" asked the count, taking the *bocchettino* of his narghile from his lips.

"Everything is going on so right that other people with an income of two hundred thousand francs would ruin themselves by going at our pace, and we have only one hundred and ten thousand."

So saying she pulled the bell-cord (an exquisite bit of needlework). A footman entered, dressed like a minister.

"Tell Captain Paz that I wish to see him."

"If you think you are going to find out anything that way —" said Comte Adam, laughing.

It is well to mention that Adam and Clémentine, married in December, 1835, had gone soon after the wedding to Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, where they spent the greater part of two years. Returning to Paris in November, 1837, the countess entered so-

clety for the first time as a married woman during the winter which had just ended, and she then became aware of the existence, half-suppressed and wholly dumb but very useful, of a species of factotum who was personally invisible, named Paz, — spelt thus, but pronounced "Patz."

"Monsieur le capitaine Paz begs Madame la comtesse to excuse him," said the footman, returning. "He is at the stables; as soon as he has changed his dress Comte Paz will present himself to Madame."

"What was he doing at the stables?"

"He was showing them how to groom Madame's horse," said the man. "He was not pleased with the way Constantin did it."

The countess looked at the footman. He was perfectly serious and did not add to his words the sort of smile by which servants usually comment on the actions of a superior who seems to them to derogate from his position.

"Ah! he was grooming Cora."

"Madame la comtesse intends to ride out this morning?" said the footman, leaving the room without further answer.

"Is Paz a Pole?" asked Clémentine, turning to her husband, who nodded by way of affirmation.

Madame Laginska was silent, examining Adam. With her feet extended upon a cushion and her head

poised like that of a bird on the edge of its nest listening to the noises in a grove, she would have seemed enchanting even to a *blasé* man. Fair and slender, and wearing her hair in curls, she was not unlike those semi-romantic pictures in the Keepsakes, especially when dressed, as she was this morning, in a breakfast gown of Persian silk, the folds of which could not disguise the beauty of her figure or the slinness of her waist. The silk with its brilliant colors being crossed upon the bosom showed the spring of the neck, — its whiteness contrasting delightfully against the tones of a guipure lace which lay upon her shoulders. Her eyes and their long black lashes added at this moment to the expression of curiosity which puckered her pretty mouth. On the forehead, which was well modelled, an observer would have noticed a roundness characteristic of the true Parisian woman, — self-willed, merry, well-informed, but inaccessible to vulgar seductions. Her hands, which were almost transparent, were hanging down at the end of each arm of her chair; the tapering fingers, slightly turned up at their points, showed nails like almonds, which caught the light. Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, and looked at her with a glance which two years of married life had not yet chilled. Already the little countess had made herself mistress of the situation, for she scarcely paid attention to her hus-

band's admiration. In fact, in the look which she occasionally cast at him, there seemed to be the consciousness of a Frenchwoman's ascendancy over the puny, volatile, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the count, hearing a step which echoed through the gallery.

The countess beheld a tall and handsome man, well-made, and bearing on his face the signs of pain which come of inward strength and secret endurance of sorrow. He wore one of those tight, frogged overcoats which were then called "polonaise." Thick, black hair, rather unkempt, covered his square head, and Clémentine noticed his broad forehead shining like a block of white marble, for Paz held his visored cap in his hand. The hand itself was like that of the Infant Hercules. Robust health flourished on his face, which was divided by a large Roman nose and reminded Clémentine of some handsome Transteverino. A black silk cravat added to the martial appearance of this six-foot mystery, with eyes of jet and Italian fervor. The amplitude of his pleated trousers, which allowed only the tips of his boots to be seen, revealed his faithfulness to the fashions of his own land. There was something really burlesque to a romantic woman in the striking contrast no one could fail to remark between the captain and the count, the little Pole with his pinched face and the stalwart soldier.

"Good morning, Adam," he said familiarly. Then he bowed courteously as he asked Clémentine what he could do for her.

"You are Laginski's friend!" exclaimed the countess.

"For life and death," answered Paz, to whom the count threw a smile of affection as he drew a last puff from his perfumed pipe.

"Then why don't you take your meals with us? why did you not accompany us to Italy and Switzerland? why do you hide yourself in such a way that I am unable to thank you for the constant services that you do for us?" said the countess, with much vivacity of manner but no feeling.

In fact, she thought she perceived in Paz a sort of voluntary servitude. Such an idea carried with it in her mind a certain contempt for a social amphibian, a being half-secretary, half-bailiff, and yet neither the one nor the other, a poor relation, an embarrassing friend.

"Because, countess," he answered with perfect ease of manner, "there are no thanks due. I am Adam's friend, and it gives me pleasure to take care of his interests."

"And you remain standing for your pleasure, too," remarked Comte Adam.

Paz sat down on a chair near the door.

"I remember seeing you about the time I was

married, and afterwards in the courtyard," said Clémentine. "But why do you put yourself in a position of inferiority, — you, Adam's friend?"

"I am perfectly indifferent to the opinion of the Parisians," he replied. "I live for myself, or, if you like, for you two."

"But the opinion of the world as to a friend of my husband is not indifferent to me —"

"Ah, madame, the world will be satisfied if you tell them I am 'an original.'"

After a moment's silence he added, "Are you going out to-day?"

"Will you come with us to the Bois?"

"Certainly."

So saying, Paz bowed and withdrew.

"What a good soul he is!" said Adam. "He has all the simplicity of a child."

"Now tell me all about your relations with him," said Clémentine.

"Paz, my dear," said Laginski, "belongs to a noble family as old and illustrious as our own. One of the Pazzi of Florence, at the time of their disasters, fled to Poland, where he settled with some of his property and founded the Paz family, to which the title of count was granted. This family, which distinguished itself greatly in the glorious days of our royal republic, became rich. The graft from the tree that was felled

in Italy flourished so vigorously in Poland that there are several branches of the family still there. I need not tell you that some are rich and some are poor. Our Paz is the scion of a poor branch. He was an orphan, without other fortune than his sword, when he served in the regiment of the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our revolution. Joining the Polish cause, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing, — three good reasons for fighting well. In his last affair, thinking he was followed by his men, he dashed upon a Russian battery and was taken prisoner. I was there. His brave act

roused me. 'Let us go and get him!' I said to my troop, and we charged the battery like a lot of foragers. I got Paz — I was the seventh man; we started twenty and came back eight, counting Paz. After Warsaw was sold we were forced to escape those Russians. By a curious chance, Paz and I happened to come together again, at the same hour and the same place, on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor captain arrested by some Prussians, who made themselves the blood-hounds of the Russians. When we have fished a man out of the Styx we cling to him. This new danger for poor Paz made me so unhappy that I let myself be taken too, thinking I could help him. Two men can get away where one will perish. Thanks to my name and some family

connections in Prussia, the authorities shut their eyes to my escape. I got my dear captain through as a man of no consequence, a family servant, and we reached Dantzic. There we got on board a Dutch vessel and went to London. It took us two months to get there. My mother was ill in England, and expecting me. Paz and I took care of her till her death, which the Polish troubles hastened. Then we left London and came to France. Men who go through such adversities become like brothers. When I reached Paris, at twenty-two years of age, and found I had an income of over sixty thousand francs a year, without counting the proceeds of the diamonds and the pictures sold by my mother, I wanted to secure the future of my dear Paz before I launched into dissipation. I had often noticed the sadness in his eyes—sometimes tears were in them. I had had good reason to understand his soul, which is noble, grand, and generous to the core. I thought he might not like to be bound by benefits to a friend who was six years younger than himself, unless he could repay them. I was careless and frivolous, just as a young fellow is, and I knew I was certain to ruin myself at play, or get inveigled by some woman, and Paz and I might then be parted; and though I had every intention of always looking out for him, I knew I might sometime or other forget to provide for him.

In short, my dear angel, I wanted to spare him the pain and mortification of having to ask me for money, or of having to hunt me up if he got into distress. So, one morning, after breakfast, when we were sitting with our feet on the andirons smoking pipes, I produced, — with the utmost precaution, for I saw him look at me uneasily, — a certificate of the Funds payable to bearer for a certain sum of money a year."

Clémentine jumped up and went and seated herself on Adam's knee, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him. "Dear treasure!" she said, "how handsome he is! Well, what did Paz do?"

"Thaddeus turned pale," said the count, "but he didn't say a word."

"Oh! his name is Thaddeus, is it?"

"Yes; Thaddeus folded the paper and gave it back to me, and then he said: 'I thought, Adam, that we were one for life or death, and that we should never part. Do you want to be rid of me?' 'Oh!' I said, 'if you take it that way, Thaddeus, don't let us say another word about it. If I ruin myself you shall be ruined too.' 'You have n't fortune enough to live as a Laginski should,' he said, 'and you need a friend who will take care of your affairs, and be a father and a brother and a trusty confidant.' My dear child, as Paz said that he had in his look and voice, calm as they were, a maternal emotion, and also the gratitude

of an Arab, the fidelity of a dog, the friendship of a savage, — not displayed but ever ready. Faith! I seized him, as we Poles do, with a hand on each shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. ‘For life and death, then! all that I have is yours—do what you will with it.’ It was he who found me this house and bought it for next to nothing. He sold my Funds high and bought in low, and we have paid for this barrack with the profits. He knows horses, and he manages to buy and sell at such advantage that my stable really costs very little; and yet I have the finest horses and the most elegant equipages in all Paris. Our servants, brave Polish soldiers chosen by him, would go through fire and water for us. I seem, as you say, to be ruining myself; and yet Paz keeps the house with such method and economy that he has even repaired some of my foolish losses at play,—the thoughtless folly of a young man. My dear, Thaddeus is as shrewd as two Genoese, as eager for gain as a Polish Jew, and provident as a good housekeeper. I never could force him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes I had to use a sort of friendly coercion to make him go to the theatre with me when I was alone, or to the jovial little dinners I used to give at a tavern. He doesn’t like social life.”

“What does he like, then?” asked Clémentine.

“Poland; he loves Poland and pines for it. His

only spendings are sums he gives, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor brother-exiles."

"Well, I shall love him, the fine fellow!" said the countess, "he looks to me as simple-hearted as he is grand."

"All these pretty things you have about you," continued Adam, who praised his friend in the noblest security, "he picked up; he bought them at auction, or as bargains from the dealers. Oh! he's keener than they are themselves. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, you may be sure he has traded away one good horse for a better. He lives for me; his happiness is to see me elegant, in a perfectly appointed equipage. The duties he takes upon himself are all accomplished without fuss or emphasis. One evening I lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I as I walked home. Paz paid them to me, not without a sigh; but he never reproached me, even by a look. But that sigh of his restrained me more than the remonstrances of uncles, mothers, or wives could have done. 'Do you regret the money?' I said to him. 'Not for you or me, no,' he replied; 'but I was thinking that twenty poor Poles could have lived a year on that sum.' You must understand that the Pazzi are fully the equal of the Laginski, so I could n't regard my dear Paz as an inferior. I never went out or came in without going first

to Paz, as I would to my father. My fortune is his; and Thaddeus knows that if danger threatened him I would fling myself into it and drag him out, as I have done before."

"And that is saying a good deal, my dear friend," said the countess. "Devotion is like a flash of lightning. Men devote themselves in battle, but they no longer have the heart for it in Paris."

"Well," replied Adam, "I am always ready, as in battle, to devote myself to Paz. Our two characters have kept their natural asperities and defects, but the mutual comprehension of our souls has tightened the bond already close between us. It is quite possible to save a man's life and kill him afterwards if we find him a bad fellow; but Paz and I know *that* of each other which makes our friendship indissoluble. There's a constant exchange of happy thoughts and impressions between us; and really, perhaps, such a friendship as ours is richer than love."

A pretty hand closed the count's mouth so promptly that the action was somewhat like a blow.

"Yes," he said, "friendship, my dear angel, knows nothing of bankrupt sentiments and collapsed joys. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives."

"One side as well as the other," remarked Clémentine laughing.

"Yes," continued Adam, "whereas friendship only increases. You need not pucker up your lips at that, for we are, you and I, as much friends as lovers; we have, at least I hope so, combined the two sentiments in our happy marriage."

"I'll explain to you what it is that has made you and Thaddeus such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference in the lives you lead comes from your tastes and from necessity; from your likings, not your positions. As far as one can judge from merely seeing a man once, and also from what you tell me, there are times when the subaltern might become the superior."

"Oh, Paz is truly my superior," said Adam, naively; "I have no advantage over him except mere luck."

His wife kissed him for the generosity of those words.

"The extreme care with which he hides the grandeur of his feelings is one form of his superiority," continued the count. "I said to him once: 'You are a sly one; you have in your heart a vast domain within which you live and think.' He has a right to the title of count; but in Paris he won't be called anything but captain."

"The fact is that the Florentine of the middle-ages has reappeared in our century," said the countess. "Dante and Michael Angelo are in him."

"That's the very truth," cried Adam. "He is a poet in soul."

“So here I am, married to two Poles,” said the young countess, with a gesture worthy of some genius of the stage.

“Dear child!” said Adam, pressing her to him, “it would have made me very unhappy if my friend did not please you. We were both rather afraid of it, he and I, though he was delighted at my marriage. You will make him very happy if you tell him that you love him, — yes, as an old friend.”

“I’ll go and dress, the day is so fine; and we will all three ride together,” said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

II

Paz was leading so subterranean a life that the fashionable world of Paris asked who he was when the Comtesse Laginska was seen in the Bois de Boulogne riding between her husband and a stranger. During the ride Clémentine insisted that Thaddeus should dine with them. This caprice of the sovereign lady compelled Paz to make an evening toilet. Clémentine dressed for the occasion with a certain coquetry, in a style that impressed even Adam himself when she entered the salon where the two friends awaited her.

"Comte Paz," she said, "you must go with us to the Opera."

This was said in the tone which, coming from a woman means: "If you refuse we shall quarrel."

"Willingly, madame," replied the captain. "But as I have not the fortune of a count, have the kindness to call me captain."

"Very good, captain; give me your arm," she said, — taking it and leading the way to the dining-room with the flattering familiarity which enchants all lovers.

The countess placed the captain beside her; his behavior was that of a poor sub-lieutenant dining at his general's table. He let Clémentine talk, listened deferentially as to a superior, did not differ with her in anything, and waited to be questioned before he spoke at all. He seemed actually stupid to the countess, whose coquettish little ways missed their mark in presence of such frigid gravity and conventional respect. In vain Adam kept saying: "Do be lively, Thaddens; one would really suppose you were not at home. You must have made a wager to disconcert Clémentine." Thaddens continued heavy and half asleep. When the servants left the room at the end of the dessert the captain explained that his habits were diametrically opposite to those of society,—he went to bed at eight o'clock and got up very early in the morning; and he excused his dulness on the ground of being sleepy.

"My intention in taking you to the Opera was to amuse you, captain; but do as you prefer," said Clémentine, rather piqued.

"I will go," said Paz.

"Duprez sings 'Guillaume Tell,'" remarked Adam. "But perhaps you would rather go to the *Variétés*?"

The captain smiled and rang the bell. "Tell Constantin," he said to the footman, "to put the horses to the carriage instead of the coupé. We should be rather squeezed otherwise," he said to the count.

"A Frenchman would have forgotten that," remarked Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah! but we are Florentines transplanted to the North," answered Thaddeus with a refinement of accent and a look in his eyes which made his conduct at table seem assumed for the occasion. There was too evident a contrast between his involuntary self-revelation in this speech and his behavior during dinner. Clémentine examined the captain with a few of those covert glances which show a woman's surprise and also her capacity for observation.

It resulted from this little incident that silence reigned in the salon while the three took their coffee, a silence rather annoying to Adam, who was incapable of imagining the cause of it. Clémentine no longer tried to draw out Thaddeus. The captain, on the other hand, retreated within his military stiffness and came out of it no more, neither on the way to the Opera nor in the box, where he seemed to be asleep.

"You see, madame, that I am a very stupid man," he said during the dance in the last act of "Guillaume Tell." "Am I not right to keep, as the saying is, to my own specialty?"

"In truth, my dear captain, you are neither a talker nor a man of the world, but you are perhaps Polish."

"Therefore leave me to look after your pleasures, your property, your household — it is all I am good for."

“Tartufe! pooh!” cried Adam, laughing. “My dear, he is full of ardor; he is thoroughly educated; he can, if he chooses, hold his own in any salon. Clémentine, don’t believe his modesty.”

“Adieu, comtesse; I have obeyed your wishes so far; and now I will take the carriage and go home to bed and send it back for you.”

Clémentine bowed her head and let him go without replying.

“What a bear!” she said to the count. “You are a great deal nicer.”

Adam pressed her hand when no one was looking.

“Poor, dear Thaddeus,” he said, “he is trying to make himself disagreeable where most men would try to seem more amiable than I.”

“Oh!” she said, “I am not sure but what there is some *calculation* in his behavior; he would have taken in an ordinary woman.”

Half an hour later, when the chasseur, Boleslas, called out “Gate!” and the carriage was waiting for it to swing back, Clémentine said to her husband, “Where does the captain perch?”

“Why, there!” replied Adam, pointing to a floor above the porte-cochère which had one window looking on the street. “His apartments are over the coachhouse.”

“Who lives on the other side?” asked the countess.

"No one as yet," said Adam; "I mean that apartment for our children and their instructors."

"He did n't go to bed," said the countess, observing lights in Thaddeus's rooms when the carriage had passed under the portico supported by columns copied from those of the Tuileries, which replaced a vulgar zinc awning painted in stripes like cloth.

The captain, in his dressing-gown with a pipe in his mouth, was watching Clémentine as she entered the vestibule. The day had been a hard one for him. And here is the reason why: A great and terrible emotion had taken possession of his heart on the day when Adam made him go to the Opera to see and give his opinion on *Mademoiselle du Rouvre*; and again when he saw her on the occasion of her marriage, and recognized in her the woman whom a man is forced to love exclusively. For this reason Paz strongly advised and promoted the long journey to Italy and elsewhere after the marriage. At peace so long as Clémentine was away, his trial was renewed on the return of the happy household. As he sat at his window on this memorable night, smoking his *latakia* in a pipe of wild-cherry wood six feet long, given to him by Adam, these are the thoughts that were passing through his mind: —

"I, and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, alone know how I love her! But how shall I manage to have neither her love nor her dislike?"

And his thoughts travelled far on this strange theme.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus was living without pleasure in the midst of his sufferings. The deceptions of this day, for instance, were a source of inward joy to him. Since the return of the count and countess he had daily felt ineffable satisfactions in knowing himself necessary to a household which, without his devotion to its interests, would infallibly have gone to ruin. What fortune can bear the strain of reckless prodigality? Clémentine, brought up by a spendthrift father, knew nothing of the management of a household which the women of the present day, however rich or noble they may be, are often compelled to undertake themselves. How few, in these days, keep a steward. Adam, on the other hand, son of one of the great Polish lords who let themselves be preyed on by the Jews, and are wholly incapable of managing even the wreck of their vast fortunes (for fortunes are vast in Poland), was not of a nature to check his own fancies or those of his wife. Left to himself he would probably have been ruined before his marriage. Paz had prevented him from gambling at the Bourse, and that says all.

Under these circumstances, Thaddeus, feeling that he loved Clémentine in spite of himself, had not the resource of leaving the house and travelling in other lands to forget his passion. Gratitude, the key-note

of his life, held him bound to that household where he alone could look after the affairs of the heedless owners. The long absence of Adam and Clémentine had given him peace. But the countess had returned more lovely than ever, enjoying the freedom which marriage brings to a Parisian woman, displaying the graces of a young wife and the nameless attraction she gains from the happiness, or the independence, bestowed upon her by a young man as trustful, as chivalric, and as much in love as Adam. To know that he was the pivot on which the splendor of the household depended, to see Clémentine when she got out of her carriage on returning from some fête, or got into it in the morning when she took her drive, to meet her on the boulevards in her pretty equipage, looking like a flower in a whorl of leaves, inspired poor Thaddeus with mysterious delights, which glowed in the depths of his heart but gave no signs upon his face.

How happened it that for five whole months the countess had never perceived the captain? Because he hid himself from her knowledge, and carefully concealed the pains he took to avoid her. Nothing so resembles the Divine love as hopeless human love. A man must have great depth of heart to devote himself in silence and obscurity to a woman. In such a heart is the worship of love for love's sake only — sublime avarice, sublime because ever generous and founded on

the mysterious existence of the principles of creation. *Effect* is nature, and nature is enchanting; it belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover. But *Cause*, to a few privileged souls and to certain mighty thinkers, is superior to nature. Cause is God. In the sphere of causes live the Newtons and all such thinkers as Laplace, Kepler, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon; also the true poets and solitarys of the second Christian century, and the Saint Teresas of Spain, and such sublime ecstasies. All human sentiments bear analogy to these conditions whenever the mind abandons Effect for Cause. Thaddeus had reached this height, at which all things change their relative aspect. Filled with the joys unutterable of a creator he had attained in his love to all that genius has revealed to us of grandeur.

"No," he was thinking to himself as he watched the curling smoke of his pipe, "she was not entirely deceived. She might break up my friendship with Adam if she took a dislike to me; but if she coquetted with me to amuse herself, what would become of me?"

The conceit of this last supposition was so foreign to the modest nature and Teutonic timidity of the captain that he scolded himself for admitting it, and went to bed, resolved to await events before deciding on a course.

The next day Clémentine breakfasted very contentedly without Paz, and without even noticing his

disobedience to her orders. It happened to be her reception day, when the house was thrown open with a splendor that was semi-royal. She paid no attention to the absence of Comte Paz, on whom all the burden of these parade days fell.

“Good!” thought he, as he heard the last carriages driving away at two in the morning; “it was only the caprice or the curiosity of a Parisian woman that made her want to see me.”

After that the captain went back to his ordinary habits and ways, which had been somewhat upset by this incident. Diverted by her Parisian occupations, Clémentine appeared to have forgotten Paz. It must not be thought an easy matter to reign a queen over fickle Paris. Does any one suppose that fortunes alone are risked in the great game? The winters are to fashionable women what a campaign once was to the soldiers of the Empire. What works of art and genius are expended on a gown or a garland in which to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate creature will wear her stiff and brilliant harness of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine at night till two and often three o'clock in the morning. She eats little, to attract remark to her slender waist; she satisfies her hunger with debilitating tea, sugared cakes, ices which heat her, or slices of heavy pastry. The stomach is made to yield to the orders of coquetry. The awakening

comes too late. A fashionable woman's whole life is in contradiction to the laws of nature, and nature is pitiless. She has no sooner risen than she makes an elaborate morning toilet, and thinks of the one which she means to wear in the afternoon. The moment she is dressed she has to receive and make visits, and go to the Bois either on horseback or in a carriage. She must practise the art of smiling, and must keep her mind on the stretch to invent new compliments which shall seem neither common nor far-fetched. All women do not succeed in this. It is no surprise, therefore, to find a young woman who entered fashionable society fresh and healthy, faded and worn out at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country will hardly heal the wounds of the winter. We hear continually, in these days, of mysterious ailments, — gastritis, and so forth, — ills unknown to women when they busied themselves about their households. In the olden time women only appeared in the world at intervals ; now they are always on the scene. Clémentine found she had to struggle for her supremacy. She was cited, and that alone brought jealousies ; and the care and watchfulness exacted by this contest with her rivals left little time even to love her husband. Paz might well be forgotten. Nevertheless, in the month of May, as she drove home from the Bois, just before she left Paris for Ronquerolles, her uncle's estate in Burgundy, she

noticed Thaddeus, elegantly dressed, sauntering on one of the side-paths of the Champs-Élysées, in the seventh heaven of delight at seeing his beautiful countess in her elegant carriage with its spirited horses and sparkling liveries, — in short, his beloved family the admired of all.

“There’s the captain,” she said to her husband.

“He’s happy!” said Adam. “This is his delight. He knows there’s no equipage more elegant than ours, and he is rejoicing to think that some people envy it. Have you only just noticed him? I see him there nearly every day.”

“I wonder what he is thinking about now,” said Clémentine.

“He is thinking that this winter has cost a good deal, and that it is time we went to economize with your old uncle Ronquerolles,” replied Adam.

The countess stopped the carriage near Paz, and bade him take the seat beside her. Thaddeus grew as red as a cherry.

“I shall poison you,” he said; “I have been smoking.”

“Does n’t Adam poison me?” she said.

“Yes, but he is Adam,” returned the captain.

“And why can’t Thaddeus have the same privileges?” asked the countess, smiling.

That divine smile had a power which triumphed over the heroic resolutions of poor Paz; he looked at

Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, though, even so, its flame was tempered by the angelic gratitude of the man whose life was based upon that virtue. The countess folded her arms in her shawl, lay back pensively on her cushions, ruffling the feathers of her pretty bonnet, and looked at the people who passed her. That flash of a great and hitherto resigned soul reached her sensibilities. What was Adam's merit in her eyes? It was natural enough to have courage and generosity. But Thaddeus — surely Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, some great superiority over Adam. They were dangerous thoughts which took possession of the countess's mind as she again noticed the contrast of the fine presence that distinguished Thaddeus, and the puny frame which in Adam showed the degenerating effects of intermarriage among the Polish aristocratic families. The devil alone knew the thoughts that were in Clémentine's head, for she sat still, with thoughtful, dreamy eyes, and without saying a word until they reached home.

"You will dine with us ; I shall be angry if you disobey me," she said as the carriage turned in. "You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know your obligations to him, but I also know those we are under to you. Both generousities are natural — but you are generous every day and all day. My father dines here to-day, also my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt Ma-

dame de Sérizy. Dress yourself therefore," she said, taking the hand he offered to assist her from the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his own room to dress with a joyful heart, though shaken by an inward dread. He went down at the last moment and behaved through dinner as he had done on the first occasion, that is, like a soldier fit only for his duties as steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe; his glance had enlightened her. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the ablest diplomates after Talleyrand, who had served with de Marsay during his short ministry, had been informed by his niece of the real worth and character of Comte Paz, and knew how modestly he made himself the steward of his friend Laginski.

"And why is this the first time I have the pleasure of seeing Comte Paz?" asked the marquis.

"Because he is so shy and retiring," replied Clémentine with a look at Paz telling him to change his behavior.

Alas! that we should have to avow it, at the risk of rendering the captain less interesting, but Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of parts. His apparent superiority was due to his misfortunes. In his lonely and poverty-stricken life in Warsaw he had read and taught himself a good deal; he had compared and meditated. But the gift of original thought

which makes a great man he did not possess, and it can never be acquired. Paz, great in heart only, approached in heart to the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiments, being more a man of action than of thought, he kept his thoughts to himself; and they only served therefore to eat his heart out. What, after all, is a thought unexpressed?

After Clémentine's little speech, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged a singular glance, embracing their niece, Comte Adam, and Paz. It was one of those rapid scenes which take place only in France and Italy, — the two regions of the world (all courts excepted) where eyes can say everything. To communicate to the eye the full power of the soul, to give it the value of speech, and to infuse a poem or a drama into a glance, needs either the pressure of extreme servitude, or complete liberty. Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and Clémentine did not observe this luminous by-play of the old coquette and the old diplomatist, but Paz, the faithful watchdog, understood its meaning. It was, we must remark, an affair of two seconds; but to describe the tempest it roused in the captain's soul would take far too much space in this brief history.

“What!” he said to himself, “do the aunt and uncle think I might be loved? Then my happiness only depends on my own audacity! But Adam —”

Ideal love and desire clashed with gratitude and friendship, all equally powerful, and, for a moment, love prevailed. The lover would have his day. Paz became brilliant, he tried to please, he told the story of the Polish insurrection in noble words, being questioned about it by the diplomatist. By the end of dinner Paz saw Clémentine hanging upon his lips and regarding him as a hero, forgetting that Adam too, after sacrificing a third of his vast fortune, had been an exile. At nine o'clock, after coffee had been served, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead, pressed her hand, and went away, taking Adam with her and leaving the Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Marquis du Rouvre, who soon followed. Paz and Clémentine were alone together.

"I will leave you now, madame," said Thaddeus. "You will of course rejoin them at the Opera?"

"No," she answered, "I don't like dancing, and they give an odious ballet to-night 'La Révolte au Sérail.'"

There was a moment's silence.

"Two years ago Adam would not have gone to the Opera without me," said Clémentine, not looking at Paz.

"He loves you madly," replied Thaddeus.

"Yes, and because he loves me madly he is all the more likely not to love me to-morrow," said the countess.

“How inexplicable Parisian women are!” exclaimed Thaddeus. “When they are loved to madness they want to be loved reasonably: and when they are loved reasonably they reproach a man for not loving them at all.”

“And they are quite right. Thaddeus,” she went on, smiling, “I know Adam well; I am not angry with him; he is volatile and above all *grand seigneur*. He will always be content to have me as his wife and he will never oppose any of my tastes, but —”

“Where is the marriage in which there are no *buts*?” said Thaddeus, gently, trying to give another direction to Clémentine’s mind.

The least presuming of men might well have had the thought which came near rendering this poor lover beside himself; it was this: “If I do not tell her now that I love her I am a fool,” he kept saying to himself.

Neither spoke; and there came between the pair one of those deep silences that are crowded with thoughts. The countess examined Paz covertly, and Paz observed her in a mirror. Buried in an armchair like a man digesting his dinner, the image of a husband or an indifferent old man, Paz crossed his hands upon his stomach and twirled his thumbs mechanically, looking stupidly at them.

“Why don’t you tell me something good of Adam?”

cried Clémentine suddenly. "Tell me that he is not volatile, you who know him so well."

The cry was fine.

"Now is the time," thought poor Paz, "to put an insurmountable barrier between us. Tell you good of Adam?" he said aloud. "I love him; you would not believe me; and I am incapable of telling you harm. My position is very difficult between you."

Clémentine lowered her head and looked down at the tips of his varnished boots.

"You Northern men have nothing but physical courage," she said complainingly; "you have no constancy in your opinions."

"How will you amuse yourself alone, madame?" said Paz, assuming an careless air.

"Are not you going to keep me company?"

"Excuse me for leaving you."

"What do you mean? Where are you going?"

The thought of an heroic falsehood had come into his head.

"I — I am going to the Circus in the Champs Élysées; it opens to-night, and I can't miss it."

"Why not?" said Clémentine, questioning him by a look that was half anger.

"Must I tell you why?" he said, coloring; "must I confide to you what I hide from Adam, who thinks my only love is Poland."

“ Ah! a secret in our noble captain? ”

“ A disgraceful one — which you will perhaps understand, and pity.”

“ You, disgraced? ”

“ Yes, I, Comte Paz; I am madly in love with a girl who travels all over France with the Bouthor family, — people who have the rival circus to Franconi; but they play only at fairs. I have made the director at the Cirque-Olympique engage her.”

“ Is she handsome? ”

“ To my thinking,” said Paz, in a melancholy tone. “ Malaga (that’s her stage name) is strong, active, and supple. Why do I prefer her to all other women in the world? — well, I can’t tell you. When I look at her, with her black hair tied with a blue satin ribbon, floating on her bare and olive-colored shoulders, and when she is dressed in a white tunic with a gold edge, and a knitted silk bodice that makes her look like a living Greek statue, and when I see her carrying those flags in her hand to the sound of martial music, and jumping through the paper hoops which tear as she goes through, and lighting so gracefully on the galloping horse to such applause, — no hired clapping, — well, all that moves me.”

“ More than a handsome woman in a ballroom? ” asked Clémentine, with amazement and curiosity.

“ Yes,” answered Paz, in a choking voice. “ Such

agility, such grace under constant danger seems to me the height of triumph for a woman. Yes, madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Ellsler, all who reign or have reigned on the stage, can't be compared, to my mind, with Malaga, who can jump on or off a horse at full gallop, or stand on the point of one foot and fall easily into the saddle, and knit stockings, break eggs, and make an omelette with the horse at full speed, to the admiration of the people, — the real people, peasants and soldiers. Malaga, madame, is dexterity personified; her little wrist or her little foot can rid her of three or four men. She is the goddess of gymnastics."

"She must be stupid —"

"Oh, no," said Paz, "I find her as amusing as the heroine of 'Peveril of the Peak.' Thoughtless as a Bohemian, she says everything that comes into her head; she thinks no more about the future than you do of the sous you fling to the poor. She says grand things sometimes. You could n't make her believe that an old diplomatist was a handsome young man, not if you offered her a million of francs. Such love as hers is perpetual flattery to a man. Her health is positively insolent, and she has thirty-two orient pearls in lips of coral. Her muzzle — that's what she calls the lower part of her face — has, as Shakspeare expresses it, the savor of a heifer's nose. She can make a man un-

happy. She likes handsome men, strong men, Alexanders, gymnasts, clowns. Her trainer, a horrible brute, used to beat her to make her supple, and graceful, and intrepid —”

“You are positively intoxicated with Malaga.”

“Oh, she is called Malaga only on the posters,” said Paz, with a piqued air. “She lives in the rue Saint-Lazare, in a pretty apartment on the third story, all velvet and silk, like a princess. She has two lives, her circus life and the life of a pretty woman.”

“Does she love you?”

“She loves me — now you will laugh — solely because I’m a Pole. She saw an engraving of Poles rushing with Poniatowski into the Elster, — for all France persists in thinking that the Elster, where it is impossible to get drowned, is an impetuous flood, in which Poniatowski and his followers were engulfed. But in the midst of all this I am very unhappy, madame.”

A tear of rage fell from his eyes and affected the countess.

“You men have such a passion for singularity.”

“And you?” said Thaddeus.

“I know Adam so well that I am certain he could forget me for some mountebank like your Malaga. Where did you first see her?”

“At Saint-Cloud, last September, on the fête-day.

She was at a corner of a booth covered with flags, where the shows are given. Her comrades, all in Polish costumes, were making a horrible racket. I watched her standing there, silent and dumb, and I thought I saw a melancholy expression in her face; in truth there was enough about her to sadden a girl of twenty. That touched me."

The countess was sitting in a delicious attitude, pensive and rather melancholy.

"Poor, poor Thaddeus!" she exclaimed. Then, with the kindliness of a true great lady she added, not without a malicious smile, "Well go, go to your Circus."

Thaddeus took her hand, kissed it, leaving a hot tear upon it, and went out.

Having invented this passion for a circus-rider, he bethought him that he must give it some reality. The only truth in his tale was the momentary attention he had given to Malaga at Saint-Cloud; and he had since seen her name on the posters of the Circus, where the clown, for a tip of five francs, had told him that the girl was a foundling, stolen perhaps. Thaddeus now went to the Circus and saw her again. For ten francs one of the grooms (who take the place in circuses of the dressers at a theatre) informed him that Malaga was named Marguerite Turquet, and lived on the fifth story of a house in the rue des Fossés-du-Temple.

The following day Paz went to the faubourg du Temple, found the house, and asked to see Mademoiselle Turquet, who during the summer was substitute for the leading horsewoman at the Cirque-Olympique, and a supernumerary at a boulevard theatre in winter.

"Malaga!" cried the portress, rushing into the attic, "there's a fine gentleman wanting you. He is getting information from Chapuzot, who is playing him off to give me time to tell you."

"Thank you, M'ame Chapuzot; but what will he think of me if he finds me ironing my gown?"

"Pooh! when a man's in love he loves everything about us."

"Is he an Englishman? they are fond of horses."

"No, he looks to me Spanish."

"That's a pity; they say Spaniards are always poor. Stay here with me, M'ame Chapuzot; I don't want him to think I'm deserted."

"Who is it you are looking for, monsieur?" asked Madame Chapuzot, opening the door for Thaddeus, who had now come upstairs.

"Mademoiselle Turquet."

"My dear," said the portress, with an air of importance, "here is some one to see you."

A line on which the clothes were drying caught the captain's hat and knocked it off.

"What is it you wish, monsieur?" said Malaga, picking up the hat and giving it to him.

"I saw you at the Circus," said Thaddeus, "and you reminded me of a daughter whom I have lost, mademoiselle; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you resemble in a most striking manner, I should like to be of some service to you, if you will permit me."

"Why, certainly; pray sit down, general," said Madame Chapuzot; "nothing could be more straightforward, more gallant."

"But I am not gallant, my good lady," exclaimed Paz. "I am an unfortunate father who tries to deceive himself by a resemblance."

"Then am I to pass for your daughter?" said Malaga, slyly, and not in the least suspecting the perfect sincerity of his proposal.

"Yes," said Paz, "and I'll come and see you sometimes. But you shall be lodged in better rooms, comfortably furnished."

"I shall have furniture!" cried Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

"And servants," said Paz, "and all you want."

Malaga looked at the stranger suspiciously.

"What countryman is monsieur?"

"I am a Pole."

"Oh! then I accept," she said.

Paz departed, promising to return.

"Well, that's a stiff one!" said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Madame Chapuzot; "I'm half afraid he is wheedling me, to carry out some fancy of his own — Pooh! I'll risk it."

A month after this eccentric interview the circus-rider was living in a comfortable apartment furnished by Comte Adam's own upholsterer, Paz having judged it desirable to have his folly talked about at the hôtel Laginski. Malaga, to whom this adventure was like a leaf out of the Arabian Nights, was served by Monsieur and Madame Chapuzot in the double capacity of friends and servants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite were constantly expecting some result of all this; but at the end of three months none of them were able to make out the meaning of the Polish count's caprice. Paz arrived duly and passed about an hour there once a week, during which time he sat in the salon, and he never went into Malaga's boudoir nor into her bedroom, in spite of the clever manœuvring of the Chapuzots and Malaga to get him there. The count would ask questions as to the small events of Marguerite's life, and each time that he came he left two gold pieces of forty francs each on the mantel-piece.

"He looks as if he did n't care to be here," said Madame Chapuzot.

"Yes," said Malaga, "the man's as cold as an icicle."

"But he's a good fellow all the same," cried Chapuzot, who was happy in a new suit of clothes made of blue cloth, in which he looked like the servant of some minister.

The sum which Paz deposited weekly on the mantelpiece, joined to Malaga's meagre salary, gave her the means of sumptuous living compared with her former poverty. Wonderful stories went the rounds of the Circus about Malaga's good-luck. Her vanity increased the six thousand francs which Paz had spent on her furniture to sixty thousand. According to the clowns and the supers, Malaga was squandering money ;

and she now appeared at the Circus wearing burnous and shawls and elegant scarfs. The Pole, it was agreed on all sides, was the best sort of man a circus-rider had ever encountered, not fault-finding nor jealous, and willing to let Malaga do just what she liked.

"Some women have the luck of it," said Malaga's rival, "and I'm not one of them, — though I do draw a third of the receipts."

Malaga wore pretty things, and occasionally "showed her head" (a term in the lexicon of such characters) in the Bois, where the fashionable young men of the day began to remark her. In fact, before long Malaga was very much talked about in the questionable world of equivocal women, who presently attacked her good fortune by calumnies. They said she was a somnambu-

list, and the Pole was a magnetizer who was using her to discover the philosopher's stone. Some even more envenomed scandals drove her to a curiosity that was greater than Psyche's. She reported them in tears to Paz.

"When I want to injure a woman," she said in conclusion, "I don't calumniate her; I don't declare that some one magnetizes her to get stones out of her, but I say plainly that she is humpbacked, and I prove it. Why do you compromise me in this way?"

Paz maintained a cruel silence. Madame Chapuzot was not long in discovering the name and title of Comte Paz; then she heard certain positive facts at the hôtel Laginski: for instance, that Paz was a bachelor, and had never been known to have a daughter, alive or dead, in Poland or in France. After that Malaga could not control a feeling of terror.

"My dear child," Madame Chapuzot would say, "that monster" — (a man who contented himself with only looking, in a sly way, — not daring to come out and say things, — and such a beautiful creature too, as Malaga, — of course such a man was a monster, according to Madame Chapuzot's ideas) — "that monster is trying to get a hold upon you, and make you do something illegal and criminal. Holy Father, if you should get into the police-courts! it makes me tremble from head to foot; suppose they should put you in the news-

papers! I'll tell you what I should do in your place; I'd warn the police."

One particular day, after many foolish notions had fermented for some time in Malaga's mind, Paz having laid his money as usual on the mantel-piece, she seized the bits of gold and flung them in his face, crying out, "I don't want stolen money!"

The captain gave the gold to Chapuzot, went away without a word, and did not return.

Clémentine was at this time at her uncle's place in Burgundy.

When the Circus troop discovered that Malaga had lost her Polish count, much excitement was produced among them. Malaga's display of honor was considered folly by some, and shrewdness by others. The conduct of the Pole, however, even when discussed by the cleverest of the women, seemed inexplicable. Thaddeus received in the course of the next week thirty-seven letters from women of their kind. Happily for him, his astonishing reserve did not excite the curiosity of the fashionable world, and was only discussed in the demi-mondaine regions.

Two weeks later the handsome circus-rider, crippled by debt, wrote the following letter to Comte Paz, which, having fallen into the hands of Comte Adam, was read by several of the dandies of the day, who pronounced it a masterpiece:—

“ You, whom I still dare to call my friend, will you not pity me after all that has passed, — which you have so ill understood? My heart disavows whatever may have wounded your feelings. If I was fortunate enough to charm you and keep you beside me in the past, return to me ; otherwise, I shall fall into despair. Poverty has overtaken me, and you do not know what *horrid things* it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring at two sous, and one sou of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you loved? The Chapuzots have left me, though they seemed so devoted. Your desertion has caused me to see to the bottom of all human attachments. The dog we feed does not leave us, but the Chapuzots have gone. A sheriff has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no heart, and the jeweller, who refused to wait even ten days, — for when we lose the confidence of such as you, credit goes too. What a position for women who have nothing to reproach themselves with but the happiness they have given! My friend, I have taken all I have of any value to *my uncle's* ; I have nothing but the memory of you left, and here is the winter coming on. I shall be fireless when it turns cold ; for the boulevards are to play only melodramas, in which I have nothing but little bits of parts which don't *pose* a woman. How could you so misunderstand the nobleness of my feelings for you? — for there are two ways

of expressing gratitude. You who seemed so happy in seeing me well-off, how can you leave me in poverty? Oh, my sole friend on earth, before I go back to the country fairs with Bouthor's circus, where I can at least make a living, forgive me if I wish to know whether I have lost you forever. If I were to let myself think of you when I jump through the hoops, I should be sure to break my legs by losing *a time*. Whatever may be the result, I am yours for life.

“MARGUERITE TURQUET.”

“That letter,” thought Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, “is worth the ten thousand francs I have spent upon her.”

III.

CLÉMENTINE came home the next day, and the day after that Paz beheld her again, more beautiful and graceful than ever. After dinner, during which the countess treated Paz with an air of perfect indifference, a little scene took place in the salon between the count and his wife when Thaddeus had left them. On pretence of asking Adam's advice, Thaddeus had left Malaga's letter with him, as if by mistake.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam, as Paz disappeared, "what a misfortune for a man of his distinction to be the plaything of the lowest kind of circus-rider. He will lose everything, and get lower and lower, and won't be recognizable before long. Here, read that," added the count, giving Malaga's letter to his wife.

Clémentine read the letter, which smelt of tobacco, and threw it from her with a look of disgust.

"Thick as the bandage is over his eyes," continued Adam, "he must have found out something; Malaga tricked him, no doubt."

"But he goes back to her," said Clémentine, "and he will forgive her! It is for such horrible women as that that you men have indulgence."

"Well, they need it," said Adam.

"Thaddeus used to show some decency—in living apart from us," she remarked. "He had better go away altogether."

"Oh, my dear angel, that's going too far," said the count, who did not want the death of the sinner.

Paz, who knew Adam thoroughly, had enjoined him to secrecy, pretending to excuse his dissipations, and had asked his friend to lend him a few thousand francs for Malaga.

"He is a very firm fellow," said Adam.

"How so?" asked Clémentine.

"Why, for having spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and letting her send him that letter before he would ask me for enough to pay her debts. For a Pole, I call that firm."

"He will ruin you," said Clémentine, in the sharp tone of a Parisian woman, when she shows her feline distrusts.

"Oh, I know him," said Adam; "he will sacrifice Malaga, if I ask him."

"We shall see," remarked the countess.

"If it is best for his own happiness, I sha'n't hesitate to ask him to leave her. Constantin says that since Paz has been with her he, sober as he is, has sometimes come home quite excited. If he takes to intoxication I shall be just as grieved as if he were my own son."

“Don’t tell me anything more about it,” cried the countess, with a gesture of disgust.

Two days later the captain perceived in the manner, the tones of voice, but, above all, in the eyes of the countess, the terrible results of Adam’s confidences. Contempt had opened a gulf between the beloved woman and himself. He was suddenly plunged into the deepest distress of mind, for the thought gnawed him, “I have myself made her despise me!” His own folly stared him in the face. Life then became a burden to him, the very sun turned gray. And yet, amid all these bitter thoughts, he found again some moments of pure joy. There were times when he could give himself up wholly to his admiration for his mistress, who paid not the slightest attention to him. Hanging about in corners at her parties and receptions, silent, all heart and eyes, he never lost one of her attitudes, nor a tone of her voice when she sang. He lived in her life; he groomed the horse which *she* rode, he studied the ways and means of that splendid establishment, to the interests of which he was now more devoted than ever. These silent pleasures were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose heart a child never knows; for is it knowing anything unless we know all? His love was more perfect than the love of Petrarch for Laura, which found its ultimate reward in the treasures of fame, the triumph of the poem which

she had inspired. Surely the emotion that the Chevalier d'Assas felt in dying must have been to him a lifetime of joy. Such emotions as these Paz enjoyed daily, — without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

But what is Love, that, in spite of all these ineffable delights, Paz should still have been unhappy? The Catholic religion has so magnified Love that she has wedded it indissolubly to respect and nobility of spirit. Love is therefore attended by those sentiments and qualities of which mankind is proud; it is rare to find true Love existing where contempt is felt. Thaddeus was suffering from the wounds his own hand had given him. The trial of his former life, when he lived beside his mistress, unknown, unappreciated, but generously working for her, was better than this. Yes, he wanted the reward of his virtue, her respect, and he had lost it. He grew thin and yellow, and so ill with constant low fever that during the month of January he was obliged to keep his bed, though he refused to see a doctor. Comte Adam became very uneasy about him; but the countess had the cruelty to remark: "Let him alone; don't you see it is only some Olympian trouble?" This remark, being repeated to Thaddeus, gave him the courage of despair; he left his bed, went out, tried a few amusements, and recovered his health.

About the end of February Adam lost a large sum of money at the Jockey-Club, and as he was afraid of

his wife, he begged Thaddeus to let the sum appear in the accounts as if he had spent it on Malaga.

"There's nothing surprising in your spending that sum on the girl; but if the countess finds out that I have lost it at cards I shall be lowered in her opinion, and she will always be suspicious in future."

"Ha! this, too!" exclaimed Thaddeus, with a sigh.

"Now, Thaddeus, if you will do me this service we shall be forever quits,—though, indeed, I am your debtor now."

"Adam, you will have children; don't gamble any more," said Paz.

"So Malaga has cost us another twenty thousand francs," cried the countess, some time later, when she discovered this new generosity to Paz. "First, ten thousand, now twenty more, — thirty thousand! the income of which is fifteen hundred! the cost of my box at the Opera, and the whole fortune of many a bourgeois. Oh, you Poles!" she said, gathering some flowers in her greenhouse; "you are really incomprehensible. Why are you not furious with him?"

"Poor Paz is —"

"Poor Paz, poor Paz, indeed!" she cried, interrupting him, "what good does he do us? I shall take the management of the household myself. You can give him the allowance he refused, and let him settle it as he likes with his Circus."

"He is very useful to us, Clémentine. He has certainly saved over forty thousand francs this last year. And besides, my dear angel, he has managed to put a hundred thousand with Nucingen, which a steward would have pocketed."

Clémentine softened down; but she was none the less hard in her feelings to Thaddeus. A few days later, she requested him to come to that boudoir where, one year earlier, she had been surprised into comparing him with her husband. This time she received him alone, without perceiving the slightest danger in so doing.

"My dear Paz," she said, with the condescending familiarity of the great to their inferiors, "if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do a thing which he will not ask of you, but which I, his wife, do not hesitate to exact."

"About Malaga?" said Thaddeus, with bitterness in his heart.

"Well, yes," she said; "if you wish to end your days in this house and continue good friends with us, you must give her up. How an old soldier —"

"I am only thirty-five, and have n't a white hair."

"You look old," she said, "and that's the same thing. How so careful a manager, so distinguished a —"

The horrible part of all this was her evident inten-

tion to rouse a sense of honor in his soul which she thought extinct.

“—so distinguished a man as you are, Thaddeus,” she resumed after a momentary pause which a gesture of his hand had led her to make, “can allow yourself to be caught like a boy! Your proceedings have made that woman celebrated. My uncle wanted to see her, and he did see her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga receives a great many gentlemen. I did think you had a noble soul. For shame! Will she be such a loss that you can’t replace her?”

“Madame, if I knew any sacrifice I could make to recover your esteem I would make it; but to give up Malaga is not one —”

“In your position, that is what I should say myself, if I were a man,” replied Clémentine. “Well, if I accept it as a great sacrifice there can be no ill-will between us.”

Paz left the room, fearing he might commit some great folly, and feeling that wild ideas were getting the better of him. He went to walk in the open air, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but without being able to cool the fire in his cheeks or on his brow.

“I thought you had a noble soul,” — the words still rang in his ears.

“A year ago,” he said to himself, “she thought me a hero who could fight the Russians single-handed!”

He thought of leaving the hôtel Laginski, and taking service with the spahis and getting killed in Africa, but the same great fear checked him. "Without me," he thought, "what would become of them? they would soon be ruined. Poor countess! what a horrible life it would be for her if she were reduced to even thirty thousand francs a year. No, since all is lost for me in this world, — courage! I will keep on as I am."

Every one knows that since 1830 the carnival in Paris has undergone a transformation which has made it European, and far more burlesque and otherwise lively than the late Carnival of Venice. Is it that the diminishing fortunes of the present time have led Parisians to invent a way of amusing themselves collectively, as for instance at their clubs, where they hold salons without hostesses and without manners, but very cheaply? However this may be, the month of March was prodigal of balls, at which dancing, joking, coarse fun, excitement, grotesque figures, and the sharp satire of Parisian wit, produced extravagant effects. These carnival follies had their special Pandemonium in the rue Saint-Honoré and their Napoleon in Musard, a small man born expressly to lead an orchestra as noisy as the disorderly audience, and to set the time for the galop, that witches' dance, which was one of Auber's triumphs, for it did not really take form or poesy till the grand galop in "Gustave" was given to the world.

That tremendous finale might serve as the symbol of an epoch in which for the last fifty years all things have hurried by with the rapidity of a dream.

Now, it happened that the grave Thaddeus, with one divine and immaculate image in his heart, proposed to Malaga, the queen of the carnival dances, to spend an evening at the Musard ball; because he knew the countess, disguised to the teeth, intended to come there with two friends, all three accompanied by their husbands, and look on at the curious spectacle of one of these crowded balls.

On Shrove Tuesday, of the year 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the countess, wrapped in a black domino and sitting on the lower step of the platform in the Babylonian hall, where Valentino has since then given his concerts, beheld Thaddeus, as Robert Macaire, threading the galop with Malaga in the dress of a savage, her head garnished with plumes like the horse of a hearse, and bounding through the crowd like a will-o-the-wisp.

"Ah!" said Clémentine to her husband, "you Poles have no honor at all! I did believe in Thaddeus. He gave me his word that he would leave that woman; he did not know that I should be here, seeing all unseen."

A few days later she requested Paz to dine with them. After dinner Adam left them alone together, and Clémentine reproved Paz and let him know very

plainly that she did not wish him to live in her house any longer.

“Yes, madame,” said Paz, humbly, “you are right; I am a wretch; I did give you my word. But you see how it is; I put off leaving Malaga till after the carnival. Besides, that woman exerts an influence over me which —”

“An influence! — a woman who ought to be turned out of Musard’s by the police for such dancing!”

“I agree to all that; I accept the condemnation and I’ll leave your house. But you know Adam. If I give up the management of your property you must show energy yourself. I may have been to blame about Malaga, but I have taken the whole charge of your affairs, managed your servants, and looked after the very least details. I cannot leave you until I see you prepared to continue my management. You have now been married three years, and you are safe from the temptations to extravagance which come with the honeymoon. I see that Parisian women, and even titled ones, do manage both their fortunes and their households. Well, as soon as I am certain not so much of your capacity as of your perseverance I shall leave Paris.”

“It is Thaddeus of Warsaw, and not that Circus Thaddeus who speaks now,” said Clémentine. “Go, and come back cured.”

"Cured! never," said Paz, his eyes lowered and fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. "You do not know, countess, what charm, what unexpected piquancy of mind she has." Then, feeling his courage fail him, he added hastily, "There is not a woman in society, with her mincing airs, that is worth the honest nature of that young animal."

"At any rate, I wish nothing of the animal about me," said the countess, with a glance like that of an angry viper.

After that evening Comte Paz showed Clémentine the exact state of her affairs; he made himself her tutor, taught her the methods and difficulties of the management of property, the proper prices to pay for things, and how to avoid being cheated by her servants. He told her she could rely on Constantin and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained the man thoroughly. By the end of May he thought the countess fully competent to carry on her affairs alone; for Clémentine was one of those far-sighted women, full of instinct, who have an innate genius as mistress of a household.

This position of affairs, which Thaddeus had led up to naturally, did not end without further cruel trials; his sufferings were fated not to be as sweet and tender as he was trying to make them. The poor lover forgot



to reckon on the hazard of events. Adam fell seriously ill, and Thaddeus, instead of leaving the house, stayed to nurse his friend. His devotion was unwearied. A woman who had any interest in employing her perspicacity might have seen in this devotion a sort of punishment imposed by a noble soul to repress an involuntary evil thought; but women see all, or see nothing, according to the condition of their souls — love is their sole illuminator.

During forty-five days Paz watched and tended Adam without appearing to think of Malaga, for the very good reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, feeling that Adam was at the point of death though still he did not die, sent for all the leading doctors of Paris in consultation.

“If he comes safely out of this,” said the most distinguished of them all, “it will only be by an effort of nature. It is for those who nurse him to watch for the moment when they must second nature. The count’s life is in the hands of his nurses.”

Thaddeus went to find Clémentine and tell her this result of the consultation. He found her sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much for a little rest as to leave the field to the doctors and not embarrass them. As he walked along the winding gravelled path which led to the pavilion, Thaddeus seemed to himself in the depths of an abyss described by Dante. The unfortunate man

had never dreamed that the possibility might arise of becoming Clémentine's husband, and now he had drowned himself in a ditch of mud. His face was convulsed, when he reached the kiosk, with an agony of grief; his head, like Medusa's, conveyed despair.

"Is he dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given him up; that is, they leave him to nature. Do not go in; they are still there, and Bianchon is changing the dressings."

"Poor Adam! I ask myself if I have not sometimes pained him," she said.

"You have made him very happy," said Thaddeus; "you ought to be easy on that score, for you have shown every indulgence for him."

"My loss would be irreparable."

"But, dear, you judged him justly."

"I was never blind to his faults," she said, "but I loved him as a wife should love her husband."

"Then you ought, in case you lose him," said Thaddeus, in a voice which Clémentine had never heard him use, "to grieve for him less than if you lost a man who was your pride, your love, and all your life, — as some men are to you women. Surely you can be frank at this moment with a friend like me. I shall grieve, too; long before your marriage I had made him my child, I had sacrificed my life to him. If he dies I shall be without an interest on earth; but life is still beautiful to a widow of twenty-four."

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"Ah! but you know that I love no one," she said, with the impatience of grief.

"You don't yet know what it is to love," said Thaddeus.

"Oh, as husbands are, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. It is now over a month that we have been saying to each other, 'Will he live?' and these alternations have prepared me, as they have you, for this loss. I can be frank with you. Well, I would give my life to save Adam. What is a woman's independence in Paris? the freedom to let herself be taken in by ruined or dissipated men who pretend to love her. I pray to God to leave me this husband who is so kind, so obliging, so little fault-finding, and who is beginning to stand in awe of me."

"You are honest, and I love you the better for it," said Thaddeus, taking her hand which she yielded to him, and kissing it. "In solemn moments like these there is unspeakable satisfaction in finding a woman without hypocrisy. It is possible to converse with you. Let us look at the future. Suppose that God does not grant your prayer,—and no one cries to him more than I do, 'Leave me my friend!' Yes, these fifty nights have not weakened me; if thirty more days and nights are needed I can give them while you sleep,—yes, I will tear him from death if, as the doctors say,

nursing can save him. But suppose that in spite of you and me, the count dies,—well, then, if you were loved, oh, adored, by a man of a heart and soul that are worthy of you —”

“I may have wished for such love, foolishly, but I have never met with it.”

“Perhaps you are mistaken —”

Clémentine looked fixedly at Thaddeus, imagining that there was less of love than of cupidity in his thoughts; her eyes measured him from head to foot and poured contempt upon him; then she crushed him with the words, “Poor Malaga!” uttered in tones which a great lady alone can find to give expression to her disdain. She rose, leaving Thaddeus half unconscious behind her, slowly re-entered her boudoir, and went back to Adam’s chamber.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick-room, and began anew, with death in his heart, his care of the count. From that moment he said nothing. He was forced to struggle with the patient, whom he managed in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At all hours his watchful eyes were like lamps always lighted. He showed no resentment to Clémentine, and listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed both dumb and deaf. To himself he was saying, “She shall owe his life to me,” and he wrote the thought as it were in letters of fire on the walls of

Adam's room. On the fifteenth day Clémentine was forced to give up the nursing, lest she should utterly break down. Paz was unwearied. At last, towards the end of August, Bianchon, the family physician, told Clémentine that Adam was out of danger.

"Ah, madame, you are under no obligation to me," he said; "without his friend, Comte Paz, we could not have saved him."

The day after the meeting of Paz and Clémentine in the kiosk, the Marquis de Ronquerolles came to see his nephew. He was on the eve of starting for Russia on a secret diplomatic mission. Paz took occasion to say a few words to him. The first day that Adam was able to drive out with his wife and Thaddeus, a gendarme entered the courtyard as the carriage was about to leave it, and asked for Comte Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting on the front seat of the calèche, turned to take a letter which bore the stamp of the ministry of Foreign affairs. Having read it, he put it into his pocket with a manner which prevented Clémentine or Adam from speaking of it. Nevertheless, by the time they reached the porte Maillot, Adam, full of curiosity, used the privilege of a sick man whose caprices are to be gratified, and said to Thaddeus: "There's no indiscretion between brothers who love each other,—tell me what there is in that despatch; I'm in a fever of curiosity."

Clémentine glanced at Thaddeus with a vexed air, and remarked to her husband: "He has been so sulky with me for the last two months that I shall never ask him anything again."

"Oh, as for that," replied Paz, "I can't keep it out of the newspapers, so I may as well tell you at once. The Emperor Nicholas has had the grace to appoint me captain in a regiment which is to take part in the expedition to Khiva."

"You are not going?" cried Adam.

"Yes, I shall go, my dear fellow. Captain I came, and captain I return. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I don't start at once for St. Petersburg I shall have to make the journey by land, and I am not rich, and I must leave Malaga a little independence. I ought to think of the only woman who has been able to understand me; she thinks me grand, superior. I dare say she is faithless, but she would jump—"

"Through the hoop, for your sake and come down safely on the back of her horse," said Clémentine, sharply.

"Oh, you don't know Malaga," said the captain, bitterly, with a sarcastic look in his eyes which made Clémentine thoughtful and uneasy.

"Good-by to the young trees of this beautiful Bois, which you Parisians love, and the exiles who find a

home here love too," he said, presently. "My eyes will never again see the evergreens of the avenue de Mademoiselle, nor the acacias nor the cedars of the *rond-points*. On the borders of Asia, fighting for the Emperor, promoted to the command, perhaps, by force of courage and by risking my life, it may happen that I shall regret these Champs-Élysées where I have driven beside you, and where you pass. Yes, I shall grieve for Malaga's hardness—the Malaga of whom I am now speaking."

This was said in a manner that made Clémentine tremble.

"Then you do love Malaga very much?" she asked.

"I have sacrificed for her the honor that no man should ever sacrifice."

"What honor?"

"That which we desire to keep at any cost in the eyes of our idol."

After that reply Thaddeus said no more; he was silent until, as they passed a wooden building on the Champs Élysées, he said, pointing to it, "That is the Circus."

He went to the Russian Embassy before dinner, and thence to the Foreign office, and the next morning he had started for Havre before the count and countess were up.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his

eyes, when he heard that Paz had gone, — “ a friend in the true meaning of the word. I don’t know what has made him abandon me as if a pestilence were in my house. We are not friends to quarrel about a woman,” he said, looking intently at Clémentine. “ You heard what he said yesterday about Malaga. Well, he has never so much as touched the little finger of that girl.”

“ How do you know that ? ” said Clémentine.

“ I had the natural curiosity to go and see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl can’t explain even to herself the absolute reserve which Thad — ”

“ Enough ! ” said the countess, retreating into her bedroom. “ Can it be that I am the victim of some noble mystification ? ” she asked herself. The thought had scarcely crossed her mind when Constantin brought her the following letter written by Thaddeus during the night : —

“ *COUNTRESS*, — To seek death in the Caucasus and carry with me your contempt is more than I can bear. A man should die untainted. When I saw you for the first time I loved you as we love a woman whom we shall love forever, even though she be unfaithful to us. I loved you thus, — I, the friend of the man you had chosen and were about to marry ; I, poor ; I, the steward, — a voluntary service, but still the steward of your household.

“In this immense misfortune I found a happy life. To be to you an indispensable machine, to know myself useful to your comfort, your luxury, has been the source of deep enjoyments. If these enjoyments were great when I thought only of Adam, think what they were to my soul when the woman I loved was the mainspring of all I did. I have known the pleasures of maternity in my love. I accepted life thus. Like the paupers who live along the great highways, I built myself a hut on the borders of your beautiful domain, though I never sought to approach you. Poor and lonely, struck blind by Adam’s good fortune, I was, nevertheless, the giver. Yes, you were surrounded by a love pure as a guardian-angel’s ; it waked while you slept ; it caressed you with a look as you passed ; it was happy in its own existence, — you were the sun of my native land to me, poor exile, who now writes to you with tears in his eyes as he thinks of the happiness of those first days.

“When I was eighteen years old, having no one to love, I took for my ideal mistress a charming woman in Warsaw, to whom I confided all my thoughts, my wishes ; I made her the queen of my nights and days. She knew nothing of all this ; why should she ? I loved my love.

“You can fancy from this incident of my youth how happy I was merely to live in the sphere of your exist-

ence, to groom your horse, to find the new-coined gold for your purse, to prepare the splendor of your dinners and your balls, to see you eclipsing the elegance of those whose fortunes were greater than yours, and all by my own good management. Ah! with what ardor I have ransacked Paris when Adam would say to me, '*She* wants this or that.' It was a joy such as I can never express to you. You wished for a trifle at one time which kept me seven hours in a cab scouring the city; and what delight it was to weary myself for you. Ah! when I saw you, unseen by you, smiling among your flowers, I could forget that no one loved me. On certain days, when my happiness turned my head, I went at night and kissed the spot where, to me, your feet had left their luminous traces. The air you had breathed was balmy; in it I breathed in more of life; I inhaled, as they say persons do in the tropics, a vapor laden with creative principles.

"I *must* tell you these things to explain the strange presumption of my involuntary thoughts, — I would have died rather than avow it until now.

"You will remember those few days of curiosity when you wished to know the man who performed the household miracles you had sometimes noticed. I thought, — forgive me, madame, — I believed you might love me. Your good-will, your glances interpreted by me, a lover, seemed to me so dangerous — for me —

that I invented that story of Malaga, knowing it was the sort of liaison which women cannot forgive. I did it in a moment when I felt that my love would be communicated, fatally, to you. Despise me, crush me with the contempt you have so often cast upon me when I did not deserve it; and yet I am certain that, if, on that evening when your aunt took Adam away from you, I had said what I have now written to you, I should, like the tamed tiger that sets his teeth once more in living flesh, and scents the blood, and —

“Midnight.

“I could not go on; the memory of that hour is still too living. Yes, I was maddened. Was there hope for me in your eyes? then victory with its scarlet banners would have flamed in mine and fascinated yours. My crime has been to think all this; perhaps wrongly. You alone can judge of that dreadful scene when I drove back love, desire, all the most invincible forces of our manhood, with the cold hand of gratitude, — gratitude which must be eternal.

“Your terrible contempt has been my punishment. You have shown me there is no return from loathing or disdain. I love you madly. I should have gone had Adam died; all the more must I go because he lives. A man does not tear his friend from the arms of death to betray him. Besides, my going is my punishment for the thought that came to me that I would

let him die, when the doctors said that his life depended on his nursing.

“Adieu, madame; in leaving Paris I lose all, but you lose nothing now in my being no longer near you.

“Your devoted

“THADDEUS PAZ.”

“If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?” thought Clémentine, sinking into a chair with her eyes fixed on the carpet.

The following letter Constantin had orders to give privately to the count: —

“MY DEAR ADAM, — Malaga has told me all. In the name of all your future happiness, never let a word escape you to Clémentine about your visits to that girl; let her think that Malaga has cost me a hundred thousand francs. I know Clémentine’s character; she will never forgive either your losses at cards or your visits to Malaga.

“I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have the spleen; and at the pace at which I mean to go I shall be either Prince Paz in three years, or dead. Good-by; though I have taken sixty thousand francs from Nucingen, our accounts are even.

“THADDEUS.”

“Idiot that I was,” thought Adam; “I came near cutting my throat just now, talking about Malaga.”

It is now three years since Paz went away. The newspapers have as yet said nothing about any Prince Paz. The Comtesse Laginska is immensely interested in the expeditions of the Emperor Nicholas; she is Russian to the core, and reads with a sort of avidity all the news that comes from that distant land. Once or twice every winter she says to the Russian ambassador, with an air of indifference, "Do you know what has become of our poor Comte Paz?"

Alas! most Parisian women, those beings who think themselves so clever and clear-sighted, pass and repass beside a Paz and never recognize him. Yes, many a Paz is unknown and misconceived, but — horrible to think of! — some are misconceived even though they are loved. The simplest women in society exact a certain amount of conventional sham from the greatest men. A noble love signifies nothing to them if rough and unpolished; it needs the cutting and setting of a jeweller to give it value in their eyes.

In January, 1842, the Comtesse Laginska, with her charm of gentle melancholy, inspired a violent passion in the Comte de La Palférine, one of the most daring and presumptuous lions of the day. La Palférine was well aware that the conquest of a woman so guarded by reserve as the Comtesse Laginska was difficult, but he thought he could inveigle this charming creature into committing herself if he took her unawares, by

[REDACTED]

“At this critical moment her arm was grasped by a powerful hand, and she was taken, in spite of her struggles, to her own carriage.”

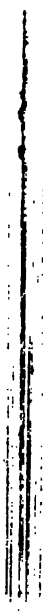
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the assistance of a certain friend of her own, a woman already jealous of her.

Quite incapable, in spite of her intelligence, of suspecting such treachery, the Comtesse Laginska committed the imprudence of going with her so-called friend to a masked ball at the Opera. About three in the morning, led away by the excitement of the scene, Clémentine, on whom La Palférine had expended his seductions, consented to accept a supper, and was about to enter the carriage of her faithless friend. At this critical moment her arm was grasped by a powerful hand, and she was taken, in spite of her struggles, to her own carriage, the door of which stood open, though she did not know it was there.

“He has never left Paris!” she exclaimed to herself as she recognized Thaddeus, who disappeared when the carriage drove away.

Did any woman ever have a like romance in her life? Clémentine is constantly hoping she may again see Paz.



MADAME FIRMIANI.





MADAME FIRMIANI.

TO MY DEAR ALEXANDRE DE BERNY.

HIS OLD FRIEND,

DE BALZAC.

MANY tales, either rich in situations or made dramatic by some of the innumerable tricks of chance, carry with them their own particular setting, which can be rendered artistically or simply by those who narrate them, without their subjects losing any, even the least of their charms. But there are some incidents in human experience to which the heart alone is able to give life; there are certain details — shall we call them anatomical? — the delicate touches of which cannot be made to reappear unless by an equally delicate rendering of thought; there are portraits which require the infusion of a soul, and mean nothing unless the subtlest expression of the speaking countenance is given; furthermore, there are things which we know not how to say or do without the aid of secret harmonies which a day, an hour, a fortunate conjunction of

celestial signs, or an inward moral tendency may produce.

Such mysterious revelations are imperatively needed in order to tell this simple history, in which we seek to interest those souls that are naturally grave and reflective and find their sustenance in tender emotions. If the writer, like the surgeon beside his dying friend, is filled with a species of reverence for the subject he is handling, should not the reader share in that inexplicable feeling? Is it so difficult to put ourselves in unison with the vague and nervous sadness which casts its gray tints all about us, and is, in fact, a semi-illness, the gentle sufferings of which are often pleasing? If the reader is of those who sometimes think upon the dear ones they have lost, if he is alone, if the day is waning or the night has come, let him read on; otherwise, he should lay aside this book at once. If he has never buried a good old relative, infirm and poor, he will not understand these pages, which to some will seem redolent of musk, to others as colorless and virtuous as those of Florian. In short, the reader must have known the luxury of tears, must have felt the silent pangs of a passing memory, the vision of a dear yet far-off Shade, — memories which bring regret for all that earth has swallowed up, with smiles for vanished joys.

And now, believe that the writer would not, for the

wealth of England, steal from poesy a single lie with which to embellish this narrative. The following is a true history, on which you may safely spend the treasures of your sensibility — if you have any.

In these days the French language has as many idioms and represents as many idiosyncracies as there are varieties of men in the great family of France. It is extremely curious and amusing to listen to the different interpretations or versions of the same thing or the same event by the various species which compose the genus Parisian, — “Parisian” is here used merely to generalize our remark.

Therefore, if you should say to an individual of the species Practical, “Do you know Madame Firmiani?” he would present that lady to your mind by the following inventory: “Fine house in the rue du Bac, salons handsomely furnished, good pictures, one hundred thousand francs a year, husband formerly receiver-general of the department of Montenotte.” So saying, the Practical man, rotund and fat and usually dressed in black, will project his lower lip and wrap it over the upper, nodding his head as if to add: “Solid people, those; nothing to be said against them.” Ask no further; Practical men settle everybody’s status by figures, incomes, or solid acres, — a phrase of their lexicon.

Turn to the right, and put the same question to that

other man, who belongs to the species Lounger. "Madame Firmiani?" he says; "yes, yes, I know her well; I go to her parties; receives Wednesdays; highly creditable house." — Madame Firmiani is metamorphosed into a house! but the house is not a pile of stones architecturally superposed, of course not, the word presents in Lounger's language an indescribable idiom. — Here the Lounger, a spare man with an agreeable smile, a sayer of pretty nothings with more acquired cleverness than native wit, stoops to your ear and adds, with a shrewd glance: "I have never seen Monsieur Firmiani. His social position is that of looking after property in Italy.

Madame Firmiani is a Frenchwoman, and spends her money like a Parisian. She has excellent tea. It is one of the few houses where you can amuse yourself; the refreshments are exquisite. It is very difficult to get admitted; therefore, of course, one meets only the best society in her salons." Here the Lounger takes a pinch of snuff; he inhales it slowly and seems to say: "*I go there, but don't expect me to present you.*"

Evidently the Lounger considers that Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn, without a sign.

"Why do you want to know Madame Firmiani? Her parties are as dull as the Court itself. What is the good of possessing a mind unless to avoid such salons, where stupid talk and foolish little ballads are

the order of the day." You have questioned a being classed Egotist, a species who would like to keep the universe under lock and key, and let nothing be done without their permission. They are unhappy if others are happy; they forgive nothing but vices, downfalls, frailties, and like none but protégés. Aristocrats by inclination, they make themselves democrats out of spite, preferring to consort with inferiors as equals.

"Oh, Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow! she is one of those adorable women who serve as Nature's excuse for all the ugly ones she creates. Madame Firmiani is enchanting, and so kind! I wish I were in power and possessed millions that I might—" (here a whisper). "Shall I present you?" The speaker is a youth of the Student species, known for his boldness among men and his timidity in a boudoir.

"Madame Firmiani?" cries another, twirling his cane. "I'll tell you what I think of her; she is a woman between thirty and thirty-five; faded complexion, handsome eyes, flat figure, contralto voice worn out, much dressed, rather rouged, charming manners; in short, my dear fellow, the remains of a pretty woman who is still worth the trouble of a passion." This remark is from the species Fop, who has just breakfasted, doesn't weigh his words, and is about to mount his horse. At that particular moment Fops are pitiless.

"Magnificent collection of pictures in her house;

go and see them by all means," answers another. "Nothing finer." You have questioned one of the species Connoisseur. He leaves you to go to Pérignon's or Tripet's. To him, Madame Firmiani is a collection of painted canvases.

A WOMAN: "Madame Firmiani? I don't wish you to visit her." This remark is rich in meanings. Madame Firmiani! dangerous woman! a siren! dresses well, has taste; gives other women sleepless nights. Your informant belongs to the genus Spiteful.

AN ATTACHÉ TO AN EMBASSY: "Madame Firmiani? Is n't she from Antwerp? I saw her ten years ago in Rome; she was very handsome then." Individuals of the species Attaché have a mania for talking in the style of Talleyrand. Their wit is often so refined that the point is imperceptible; they are like billiard-players who avoid hitting a ball with consummate dexterity. These individuals are usually taciturn, and when they talk it is only about Spain, Vienna, Italy, or Petersburg. Names of countries act like springs in their mind; press them, and the ringing of their changes begins.

"That Madame Firmiani sees a great deal of the faubourg Saint-Germain, does n't she?" This from a person who desires to belong to the class Distinguished. She gives the *de* to everybody, — to Monsieur Dupin senior, to Monsieur Lafayette; she flings it right and left and humiliates many. This woman spends her life

in striving to know and do "the right thing;" but, for her sins, she lives in the Marais, and her husband is a lawyer, — a lawyer before the Royal courts, however.

"Madame Firmiani, monsieur? I do not know her." This man belongs to the species Duke. He recognizes none but the women who have been presented at court. Pray excuse him, he was one of Napoleon's creations.

"Madame Firmiani? surely she used to sing at the Opera-house." Species Ninny. The individuals of this species have an answer for everything. They will tell lies sooner than say nothing.

TWO OLD LADIES, wives of former magistrates: *The First* (wears a cap with bows, her face is wrinkled, her nose sharp, voice hard, carries a prayer-book in her hand): "What was that Madame Firmiani's maiden name?" — *The Second* (small face red as a crab-apple, gentle voice): "She was a Cadignan, my dear, niece of the old Prince de Cadignan, consequently cousin to the present Duc de Maufrigneuse."

Madame Firmiani is a Cadignan. She might have neither virtue, nor wealth, nor youth, but she would still be a Cadignan; it is like a prejudice, always alive and working.

AN ORIGINAL: "My dear fellow, I've seen no galoshes in her antechamber; consequently you can visit her without compromising yourself, and play cards there without fear; if there *are* any scoundrels in her salons,

they are people of quality and come in their carriages; such persons never quarrel."

OLD MAN BELONGING TO THE GENUS OBSERVER: "If you call on Madame Firmiani, my good friend, you will find a beautiful woman sitting at her ease by the corner of her fireplace. She will scarcely rise to receive you, — she only does that for women, ambassadors, dukes, and persons of great distinction. She is very gracious, she possesses charm; she converses well, and likes to talk on many topics. There are many indications of a passionate nature about her; but she has, evidently, so many adorers that she cannot have a favorite. If suspicion rested on two or three of her intimates, we might say that one or other of them was the *cavaliere servente*; but it does not. The lady is a mystery. She is married, though none of us have seen her husband. Monsieur Firmiani is altogether mythical; he is like that third post-horse for which we pay though we never behold it. Madame has the finest contralto voice in Europe, so say judges; but she has never been heard to sing more than two or three times since she came to Paris. She receives much company, but goes nowhere."

The Observer speaks, you will notice, as an Oracle. His words, anecdotes, and quotations must be accepted as truths, under pain of being thought without social education or intelligence, and of causing him to slander

you with much zest in twenty salons where he is considered indispensable. The Observer is forty years of age, never dines at home, declares himself no longer dangerous to women, wears a maroon coat, and has a place reserved for him in several boxes at the "Bouffons." He is sometimes confounded with the Parasite; but he has filled too many real functions to be thought a sponger; moreover he possesses a small estate in a certain department, the name of which he has never been known to utter.

"Madame Firmiani? why, my dear fellow, she was Murat's former mistress." This man belongs to the Contradictors, — persons who note errata in memoirs, rectify dates, correct facts, bet a hundred to one, and are certain about everything. You can easily detect them in some gross blunder in the course of a single evening. They will tell you they were in Paris at the time of Mallet's conspiracy, forgetting that half an hour earlier they had described how they crossed the Berezina. Nearly all Contradictors are *chevaliers* of the Legion of honor; they talk loudly, have retreating foreheads, and play high.

"Madame Firmiani a hundred thousand francs a year? nonsense, you are crazy! Some people will persist in giving millions with the liberality of authors, to whom it does n't cost a penny to dower their heroines. Madame Firmiani is simply a coquette, who has

lately ruined a young man, and now prevents him from making a fine marriage. If she were not so handsome she would n't have a penny."

Ah, *that one* — of course you recognize him — belongs to the species Envious. There is no need to sketch him; the species is as well known as that of the *felis domestica*. But how explain the perennial vigor of envy? — a vice that brings nothing in!

Persons in society, literary men, honest folk, — in short, individuals of all species, — were promulgating in the month of January, 1824, so many different opinions about Madame Firmiani that it would be tedious to write them down. We have merely sought to show that a man seeking to understand her, yet unwilling or unable to go to her house, would (from the answers to his inquiries) have had equal reason to suppose her a widow or wife, silly or wise, virtuous or the reverse, rich or poor, soulless or full of feeling, handsome or plain, — in short, there were as many Madame Firmianis as there are species in society, or sects in catholicism. Frightful reflection! we are all like lithographic blocks, from which an indefinite number of copies can be drawn by criticism, — the proofs being more or less like us according to a distribution of shading which is so nearly imperceptible that our reputation depends (barring the calumnies of friends and the witticisms of newspapers) on the balance struck by our

criticisers between Truth that limps and Falsehood to which Parisian wit gives wings.

Madame Firmiani, like other noble and dignified women who make their hearts a sanctuary and disdain the world, was liable, therefore, to be totally misjudged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old country magnate, who had reason to think a great deal about her during the winter of this year. He belonged to the class of provincial Planters, men living on their estates, accustomed to keep close accounts of everything and to bargain with the peasantry. Thus employed, a man becomes sagacious in spite of himself, just as soldiers in the long run acquire courage from routine. The old gentleman, who had come to Paris from Touraine to satisfy his curiosity about Madame Firmiani, and found it not at all assuaged by the Parisian gossip which he heard, was a man of honor and breeding. His sole heir was a nephew, whom he greatly loved, in whose interests he planted his poplars. When a man thinks without annoyance about his heir, and watches the trees grow daily finer for his future benefit, affection grows too with every blow of the spade around their roots. Though this phenomenal feeling is not common, it is still to be met with in Touraine.

This cherished nephew, named Octave de Camps, was a descendant of the famous Abbé de Camps so well known to bibliophiles and learned men, — who, by

the bye, are not at all the same thing. People in the provinces have the bad habit of branding with a sort of decent reprobation any young man who sells his inherited estates. This antiquated prejudice has interfered very much with the stock-jobbing which the present government encourages for its own interests. Without consulting his uncle, Octave had lately sold an estate belonging to him to the Black Band.¹ The château de Villaines would have been pulled down were it not for the remonstrances which the old uncle made to the representatives of the "Pickaxe company." To increase the old gentleman's wrath, a distant relative (one of those cousins of small means and much astuteness about whom shrewd provincials are wont to remark, "No lawsuits for me with him!") had, as it were by accident, come to visit Monsieur de Bourbonne, and *incidentally* informed him of his nephew's ruin. Monsieur Octave de Camps, he said, having wasted his means on a certain Madame Firmiani, was now reduced to teaching mathematics for a living, while awaiting his uncle's death, not daring to let him know of his dissipations. This distant cousin, a sort of Charles Moor, was not ashamed to give this fatal news to the old gentleman as he sat by his fire, digesting a profuse provincial dinner.

¹ The *Bande Noire* was a mysterious association of speculators, whose object was to buy in landed estates, cut them up, and sell them off in small parcels to the peasantry, or others.

But heirs cannot always rid themselves of uncles as easily as they would like to. Thanks to his obstinacy, this particular uncle refused to believe the story, and came out victorious from the attack of indigestion produced by his nephew's biography. Some shocks affect the heart, others the head; but in this case the cousin's blow fell on the digestive organs and did little harm, for the old man's stomach was sound. Like a true disciple of Saint Thomas, Monsieur de Bourbonne came to Paris, unknown to Octave, resolved to make full inquiries as to his nephew's insolvency. Having many acquaintances in the faubourg Saint-Germain, among the Listomères, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses, he heard so much gossip, so many facts and falsities, about Madame Firmiani that he resolved to be presented to her under the name of de Rouxellay, that of his estate in Touraine. The astute old gentleman was careful to choose an evening when he knew that Octave would be engaged in finishing a piece of work which was to pay him well, — for this so-called lover of Madame Firmiani still went to her house; a circumstance that seemed difficult to explain. As to Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fable, as Monsieur de Bourbonne had at once discovered.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like the provincial uncle at the Gymnase. Formerly in the King's guard, a man of the world and a favorite among women,

he knew how to present himself in society with the courteous manners of the olden time; he could make graceful speeches and understand the whole Charter, or most of it. Though he loved the Bourbons with noble frankness, believed in God as a gentleman should, and read nothing but the "*Quotidienne*," he was not as ridiculous as the liberals of his department would fain have had him. He could hold his own in the court circle, provided no one talked to him of "*Moses in Egypt*," nor of the drama, or romanticism, or local color, nor of railways. He himself had never got beyond Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Peyronnet, and the Chevalier Glück, the Queen's favorite musician.

"Madame," he said to the Marquise de Listomère, who was on his arm as they entered Madame Firmiani's salons, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity him. How can she live in the midst of this luxury and know that he is in a garret? Hasn't she any soul? Octave is a fool to have given up such an estate as Villaines for a —"

Monsieur de Bourbonne belonged to the species Fossil, and used the language of the days of yore.

"But suppose he had lost it at play?"

"Then, madame, he would at least have had the pleasure of gambling."

"And do you think he has had no pleasure here? See! look at Madame Firmiani."

The brightest memories of the old man faded at the sight of his nephew's so-called mistress. His anger died away in the gracious exclamation which came from his lips as he looked at her. By one of those fortunate accidents which happen only to pretty women, it was a moment when all her beauties shone with peculiar lustre, due perhaps to the wax-lights, to the charming simplicity of her dress, to the ineffable atmosphere of elegance that surrounded her. One must needs have studied the transitions of an evening in a Parisian salon to appreciate the imperceptible lights and shades which color a woman's face and vary it. There comes a moment when, content with her toilet, pleased by her own wit, delighted to be admired, and feeling herself the queen of a salon full of remarkable men who smile to her, the Parisian woman reaches a full consciousness of her grace and charm; her beauty is enhanced by the looks she gathers in, — a mute homage which she transfers with subtile glances to the man she loves. At moments like these a woman is invested with supernatural power and becomes a magician, a charmer, without herself knowing that she is one; involuntarily she inspires the love that fills her own bosom; her smiles and glances fascinate. If this condition, which comes from the soul, can give attraction even to a plain woman, with what radiance does it not invest a woman of natural elegance, distinguished bearing, fair,

fresh, with speaking eyes, and dressed in a taste that wrings approval from artists and her bitterest rivals.

Have you ever, for your happiness, met a woman whose harmonious voice gives to her speech the same charm that emanates from her manners? a woman who knows how to speak and to be silent, whose words are happily chosen, whose language is pure, and who concerns herself in your interests with delicacy? Her raillery is caressing, her criticism never wounds; she neither discourses nor argues, but she likes to lead a discussion and stop it at the right moment. Her manner is affable and smiling, her politeness never forced, her readiness to serve others never servile; she reduces the respect she claims to a soft shadow; she never wearies you, and you leave her satisfied with her and with yourself. Her charming grace is conveyed to all the things with which she surrounds herself. Everything about her pleases the eye; in her presence you breathe, as it were, your native air. This woman is natural. There is no effort about her; she is aiming at no effect; her feelings are shown simply, because they are true. Frank herself, she does not wound the vanity of others; she accepts men as God made them; pitying the vicious, forgiving defects and absurdities, comprehending all ages, and vexed by nothing, because she has had the sense and tact to foresee all. Tender and gay, she gratifies before she consoles. You love

her so well that if this angel did wrong you would be ready to excuse her. If, for your happiness, you have met with such a woman, you know Madame Firmiani.

After Monsieur de Bourbonne had talked with her for ten minutes, sitting beside her, his nephew was forgiven. He perceived that whatever the actual truth might be, the relation between Madame Firmiani and Octave covered some mystery. Returning to the illusions that gild the days of youth, and judging Madame Firmiani by her beauty, the old gentleman became convinced that a woman so innately conscious of her dignity as she appeared to be was incapable of a bad action. Her dark eyes told of inward peace; the lines of her face were so noble, the profile so pure, and the passion he had come to investigate seemed so little to oppress her heart, that the old man said to himself, while noting all the promises of love and virtue given by that adorable countenance, "My nephew is committing some folly."

Madame Firmiani acknowledged to twenty-five. But the Practicals proved that having married the invisible Firmiani (then a highly respectable individual in the forties) in 1813, at the age of sixteen, she must be at least twenty-eight in 1825. However the same persons also asserted that at no period of her life had she ever been so desirable or so completely a woman. She was now at an age when women are most prone to conceive

a passion, and to desire it, perhaps, in their pensive hours. She possessed all that earth sells, all that it lends, all that it gives. The Attachés declared there was nothing of which she was ignorant; the Contradictors asserted that there was much she ought to learn; the Observers remarked that her hands were white, her feet small, her movements a trifle too undulating. But, nevertheless, individuals of all species envied or disputed Octave's happiness, agreeing, for once in a way, that Madame Firmiani was the most aristocratically beautiful woman in Paris.

Still young, rich, a perfect musician, intelligent, witty, refined, and received (as a Cadignan) by the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, that oracle of the noble faubourg, loved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse her cousin, the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame de Macumer, — Madame Firmiani gratified all the vanities which feed or excite love. She was therefore sought by too many men not to fall a victim to Parisian malice and its charming calumnies, whispered behind a fan or in a safe aside. It was necessary to quote the remarks given at the beginning of this history to bring out the true Firmiani in contradistinction to the Firmiani of society. If some women forgave her happiness, others did not forgive her propriety. Now nothing is so dangerous in Paris as unfounded suspicions, — for the reason that it is impossible to destroy them.

This sketch of a woman who was admirably natural gives only a faint idea of her. It would need the pencil of an Ingres to render the pride of that brow, with its wealth of hair, the dignity of that glance, and the thoughts betrayed by the changing colors of the cheeks. In her were all things; poets could have found an Agnes Sorel and a Joan of Arc, also the woman unknown, the Soul within that form, the soul of Eve, the knowledge of the treasures of good and the riches of evil, error and resignation, crime and devotion, the Donna Julia and the Haidee of Lord Byron.

The former guardsman stayed, with apparent impertinence, after the other guests had left the salons; and Madame Firmiani found him sitting quietly before her in an armchair, evidently determined to remain, with the pertinacity of a fly which we are forced to kill to get rid of it. The hands of the clock marked two in the morning.

"Madame," said the old gentleman, as Madame Firmiani rose, hoping to make him understand that it was her good pleasure he should go, "Madame, I am the uncle of Monsieur Octave de Camps."

Madame Firmiani immediately sat down again, and showed her emotion. In spite of his sagacity the old Planter was unable to decide whether she turned pale from shame or pleasure. There are pleasures, delicious emotions the chaste heart seeks to veil, which cannot es-

cape the shock of startled modesty. The more delicacy a woman has, the more she seeks to hide the joys that are in her soul. Many women, incomprehensible in their tender caprices, long to hear a name pronounced which at other times they desire to bury in their hearts. Monsieur de Bourbonne did not interpret Madame Firmiani's agitation exactly in this way: pray forgive him, all provincials are distrustful.

"Well, monsieur?" said Madame Firmiani, giving him one of those clear, lucid glances in which we men can never see anything because they question us too much.

"Well, madame," returned the old man, "do you know what some one came to tell me in the depths of my province? That my nephew had ruined himself for you, and that the poor fellow was living in a garret while you were in silk and gold. Forgive my rustic sincerity; it may be useful for you to know of these calumnies."

"Stop, monsieur," said Madame Firmiani, with an imperative gesture; "I know all that. You are too polite to continue this subject if I request you to leave it, and too gallant—in the old-fashioned sense of the word," she added with a slight tone of irony—"not to agree that you have no right to question me. It would be ridiculous in me to defend myself. I trust that you will have a sufficiently good opinion of my character to

believe in the profound contempt which, I assure you, I feel for money,—although I was married, without any fortune, to a man of immense wealth. It is nothing to me whether your nephew is rich or poor; if I have received him in my house, and do now receive him, it is because I consider him worthy to be counted among my friends. All my friends, monsieur, respect each other; they know that I have not philosophy enough to admit into my house those I do not esteem; this may argue a want of charity; but my guardian-angel has maintained in me to this day a profound aversion for tattle, and also for dishonesty.”

Though the ring of her voice was slightly raised during the first part of this answer, the last words were said with the ease and self-possession of Célimène bantering the Misanthrope.

“Madame,” said Monsieur de Bourbonne, in a voice of some emotion, “I am an old man; I am almost Octave’s father, and I ask your pardon most humbly for the question that I shall now venture to put to you, giving you my word of honor as a loyal gentleman that your answer shall die here,”—laying his hand upon his heart, with an old-fashioned gesture that was truly religious. “Are these rumors true; do you love Octave?”

“Monsieur,” she replied, “to any other man I should answer that question only by a look; but to you, and because you are indeed almost the father of Mon-

sieur de Camps, I reply by asking what you would think of a woman if to such a question she answered *yes*? To avow our love to him we love, when he loves us — ah! that may be; but even when we are certain of being loved forever, believe me, monsieur, it is an effort for us, and a reward to him. To say to another! —”

She did not end her sentence, but rose, bowed to the old man, and withdrew into her private apartments, the doors of which, opening and closing behind her, had a language of their own to his sagacious ears.

“Ah! the mischief!” thought he; “what a woman! she is either a sly one or an angel;” and he got into his hired coach, the horses of which were stamping on the pavement of the silent courtyard, while the coachman was asleep on his box after cursing for the hundredth time his tardy customer.

The next morning about eight o'clock the old gentleman mounted the stairs of a house in the rue de l'Observance where Octave de Camps was living. If there was ever an astonished man it was the young professor when he beheld his uncle. The door was unlocked, his lamp still burning; he had been sitting up all night.

“You rascal!” said Monsieur de Bourbonne, sitting down in the nearest chair; “since when is it the fashion to laugh at uncles who have twenty-six thousand francs

a year from solid acres to which we are the sole heir? Let me tell you that in the olden time we stood in awe of such uncles as that. Come, speak up, what fault have you to find with me? Have n't I played my part as uncle properly? Did I ever require you to respect me? Have I ever refused you money? When did I shut the door in your face on pretence that you had come to look after my health? Have n't you had the most accommodating and the least domineering uncle that there is in France, — I wont say Europe, because that might be too presumptuous. You write to me, or you don't write, — no matter, I live on pledged affection, and I am making you the prettiest estate in all Touraine, the envy of the department. To be sure, I don't intend to let you have it till the last possible moment, but that's an excusable little fancy, is n't it? And what does monsieur himself do? — sells his own property and lives like a lackey! — ”

“Uncle — ”

“I 'm not talking about uncles, I 'm talking nephew. I have a right to your confidence. Come, confess at once; it is much the easiest way; I know that by experience. Have you been gambling? have you lost money at the Bourse? Say, ‘Uncle, I'm a wretch,’ and I'll hug you. But if you tell me any lies greater than those I used to tell at your age I'll sell my property, buy an annuity, and go back to the evil ways of my youth — if I can.”

“Uncle — ”

“I saw your Madame Firmiani yesterday,” went on the old fellow, kissing the tips of his fingers, which he gathered into a bunch. “She is charming. You have the consent and approbation of your uncle, if that will do you any good. As to the sanction of the Church, I suppose that’s useless, and the sacraments cost so much in these days. Come, speak out, have you ruined yourself for her?”

“Yes, uncle.”

“Ha ! the jade ! I’d have wagered it. In my time the women of the court were cleverer at ruining a man than the courtesans of to-day ; but this one — I recognized her ! — is a bit of the last century.”

“Uncle,” said Octave, with a manner that was tender and grave, “you are totally mistaken. Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the adoration the world gives her.”

“Youth, youth ! always the same !” cried Monsieur de Bourbonne. “Well, go on ; tell me the same old story. But please remember that my experience in gallantry is not of yesterday.”

“My dear, kind uncle, here is a letter which will tell you nearly all,” said Octave, taking it from an elegant portfolio, *her* gift, no doubt. “When you have read it I will tell you the rest, and you will then know a Madame Firmiani who is unknown to the world.”

"I have n't my spectacles ; read it aloud."

Octave began : —

" ' MY BELOVED — ' "

"Hey, then you are still intimate with her?" interrupted his uncle.

"Why yes, of course."

"You have n't parted from her?"

"Parted!" repeated Octave, "we are married."

"Heavens!" cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, "then why do you live in a garret?"

"Let me go on."

"True — I'm listening."

Octave resumed the letter, but there were passages which he could not read without deep emotion.

" ' MY BELOVED HUSBAND, — You ask me the reason of my sadness. Has it, then, passed from my soul to my face ; or have you only guessed it? — but how could you fail to do so, one in heart as we are? I cannot deceive you ; this may be a misfortune, for it is one of the conditions of happy love that a wife shall be gay and caressing. Perhaps I ought to deceive you, but I would not do it even if the happiness with which you have blessed and overpowered me depended on it.

" ' Ah! dearest, how much gratitude there is in my love. I long to love you forever, without limit ; yes, I desire to be forever proud of you. A woman's glory

is in the man she loves. Esteem, consideration, honor, must they not be his who receives our all? Well, my angel has fallen. Yes, dear, the tale you told me has tarnished my past joys. Since then I have felt myself humiliated in you, — you whom I thought the most honorable of men, as you are the most loving, the most tender. I must indeed have deep confidence in your heart, so young and pure, to make you this avowal which costs me much. Ah! my dear love, how is it that you, knowing your father had unjustly deprived others of their property, that *you* can keep it?

“‘And you told me of this criminal act in a room filled with the mute witnesses of our love; and you are a gentleman, and you think yourself noble, and I am yours! I try to find excuses for you; I do find them in your youth and thoughtlessness. I know there is still something of the child about you. Perhaps you have never thought seriously of what fortune and integrity are. Oh! how your laugh wounded me. Reflect on that ruined family, always in distress; poor young girls who have reason to curse you daily; an old father saying to himself each night: “We might not now be starving if that man’s father had been an honest man — ” ’”

“Good heavens!” cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting his nephew, “surely you have not been

such a fool as to tell that woman about your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women know more about wasting a fortune than making one."

"They know about integrity. But let me read on, uncle."

" 'Octave, no power on earth has authority to change the principles of honor. Look into your conscience and ask it by what name you are to call the action by which you hold your property.' "

The nephew looked at the uncle, who lowered his head.

" 'I will not tell you all the thoughts that assail me; they can be reduced to one, — this is it: I cannot respect the man who, knowingly, is smirched for a sum of money, whatever the amount may be; five francs stolen at play or five times a hundred thousand gained by a legal trick are equally dishonoring. I will tell you all. I feel myself degraded by the very love which has hitherto been all my joy. There rises in my soul a voice which my tenderness cannot stifle. Ah! I have wept to feel that I have more conscience than love. Were you to commit a crime I would hide you in my bosom from human justice, but my devotion could go no farther. Love, to a woman,

means boundless confidence, united to a need of reverencing, of esteeming, the being to whom she belongs. I have never conceived of love otherwise than as a fire in which all noble feelings are purified still more, — a fire which develops them.

“‘I have but one thing else to say: come to me poor, and my love shall be redoubled. If not, renounce it. Should I see you no more, I shall know what it means.

“‘But I do not wish, understand me, that you should make restitution because I urge it. Consult your own conscience. An act of justice such as that ought not to be a sacrifice made to love. I am your wife and not your mistress, and it is less a question of pleasing me than of inspiring in my soul a true respect.

“‘If I am mistaken, if you have ill-explained your father’s action, if, in short, you still think your right to the property equitable (oh! how I long to persuade myself that you are blameless), consider and decide by listening to the voice of your conscience; act wholly and solely from yourself. A man who loves a woman sincerely, as you love me, respects the sanctity of her trust in him too deeply to dishonor himself.

“‘I blame myself now for what I have written; a word might have sufficed, and I have preached to you! Scold me; I wish to be scolded, — but not much, only a

little. Dear, between us two the power is yours — you alone should perceive your own faults.’ ”

“ Well, uncle ? ” said Octave, whose eyes were full of tears.

“ There’s more in the letter ; finish it. ”

“ Oh, the rest is only to be read by a lover, ” answered Octave, smiling.

“ Yes, right, my boy, ” said the old man, gently. “ I have had many affairs in my day, but I beg you to believe that I too have loved, *et ego in Arcadiâ*. But I don’t understand yet why you give lessons in mathematics. ”

“ My dear uncle, I am your nephew ; is n’t that as good as saying that I had dipped into the capital left me by my father ? After I had read this letter a sort of revolution took place within me. I paid my whole arrearage of remorse in one day. I cannot describe to you the state I was in. As I drove in the Bois a voice called to me, ‘ That horse is not yours ; ’ when I ate my dinner it was saying, ‘ You have stolen this food. ’ I was ashamed. The fresher my honesty, the more intense it was. I rushed to Madame Firmiani. Uncle ! that day I had pleasures of the heart, enjoyments of the soul, that were far beyond millions. Together we made out the account of what was due to the Bourgneufs, and I condemned myself, against Madame

Firmiani's advice, to pay three per cent interest. But all I had did not suffice to cover the full amount. We were lovers enough for her to offer, and me to accept, her savings —"

"What! besides her other virtues does that adorable woman lay by money?" cried his uncle.

"Don't laugh at her, uncle; her position has obliged her to be very careful. Her husband went to Greece in 1820, and died there three years later. It has been impossible, up to the present time, to get legal proofs of his death, or obtain the will which he made leaving his whole property to his wife. These papers were either lost or stolen, or have gone astray during the troubles in Greece, — a country where registers are not kept as they are in France, and where we have no consul. Uncertain whether she might not be forced to give up her fortune, she has lived with the utmost prudence. As for me, I wish to acquire property which shall be *mine*, so as to provide for my wife in case she is forced to lose hers."

"But why didn't you tell me all this? My dear nephew, you might have known that I love you enough to pay all your good debts, the debts of a gentleman. I'll play the traditional uncle now, and revenge myself!"

"Ah! uncle, I know your vengeance! but let me get rich by my own industry. If you want to do me a

real service, make me an allowance of two or three thousand francs a year, till I see my way to an enterprise for which I shall want capital. At this moment I am so happy that all I desire is just the means of living. I give lessons so that I may not live at the cost of *any one*. If you only knew the happiness I had in making that restitution! I found the Bourgneufs, after a good deal of trouble, living miserably and in need of everything. The old father was a lottery agent; the two daughters kept his books and took care of the house; the mother was always ill. The daughters are charming girls, but they have been cruelly taught that the world thinks little of beauty without money. What a scene it was! I entered their house the accomplice in a crime; I left it an honest man, who had purged his father's memory. Uncle, I don't judge him; there is such excitement, such passion in a lawsuit that even an honorable man may be led astray by them. Lawyers can make the most unjust claims legal; laws have convenient syllogisms to quiet consciences. My visit was a drama. To be Providence itself; actually to fulfil that futile wish, "If heaven were to send us twenty thousand francs a year," — that silly wish we all make, laughing; to bring opulence to a family sitting by the light of one miserable lamp over a poor turf fire! — no, words cannot describe it. My extreme justice seemed to them unjust. Well! if there is a

Paradise my father is happy in it now. As for me, I am loved as no man was ever loved yet. Madame Firmiani gives me more than happiness; she has inspired me with a delicacy of feeling I think I lacked. So I call her *my dear conscience*, — a love-word which expresses certain secret harmonies within our hearts. I find honesty profitable; I shall get rich in time by myself. I've an industrial scheme in my head, and if it succeeds I shall earn millions."

"Ah! my boy, you have your mother's soul," said the old man, his eyes filling at the thought of his sister.

Just then, in spite of the distance between Octave's garret and the street, the young man heard the sound of a carriage.

"There she is!" he cried; "I know her horses by the way they are pulled up."

A few moments more, and Madame Firmiani entered the room.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of annoyance on seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. "But our uncle is not in the way," she added quickly, smiling; "I came to humbly entreat my husband to accept my fortune. The Austrian Embassy has just sent me a document which proves the death of Monsieur Firmiani, also the will, which his valet was keeping safely to put into my own hands. Octave, you can accept it all; you are richer

than I, for you have treasures here" (laying her hand upon his heart) "to which none but God can add." Then, unable to support her happiness, she laid her head upon her husband's breast.

"My dear niece," said the old man, "in my day, we made love; in yours, you love. You women are all that is best in humanity; you are not even guilty of your faults, for they come through us."

THE END.





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